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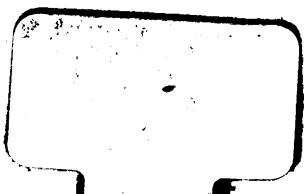
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THE SOUTHERN LAMP

by

HECTOR
MAC GREGOR.



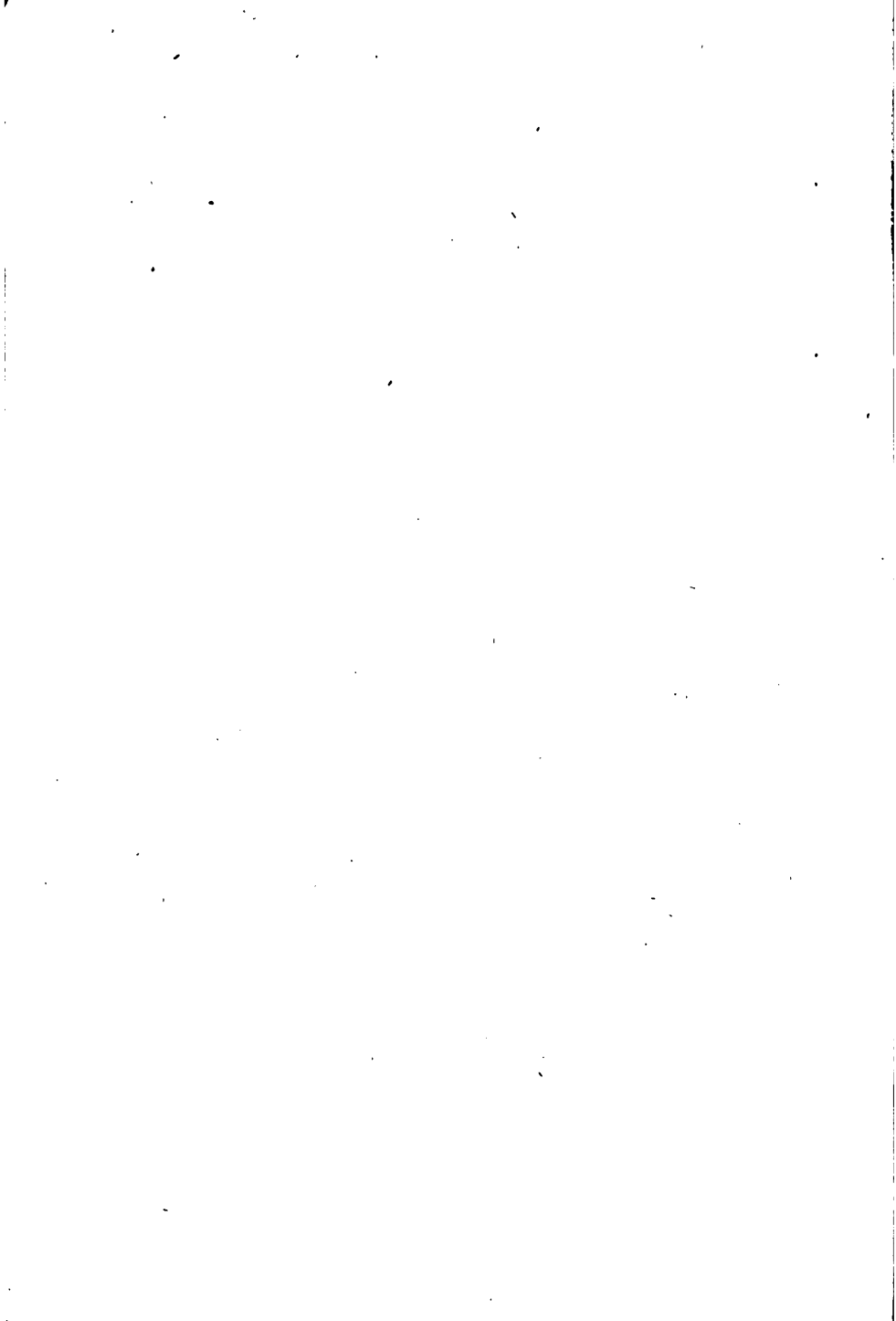


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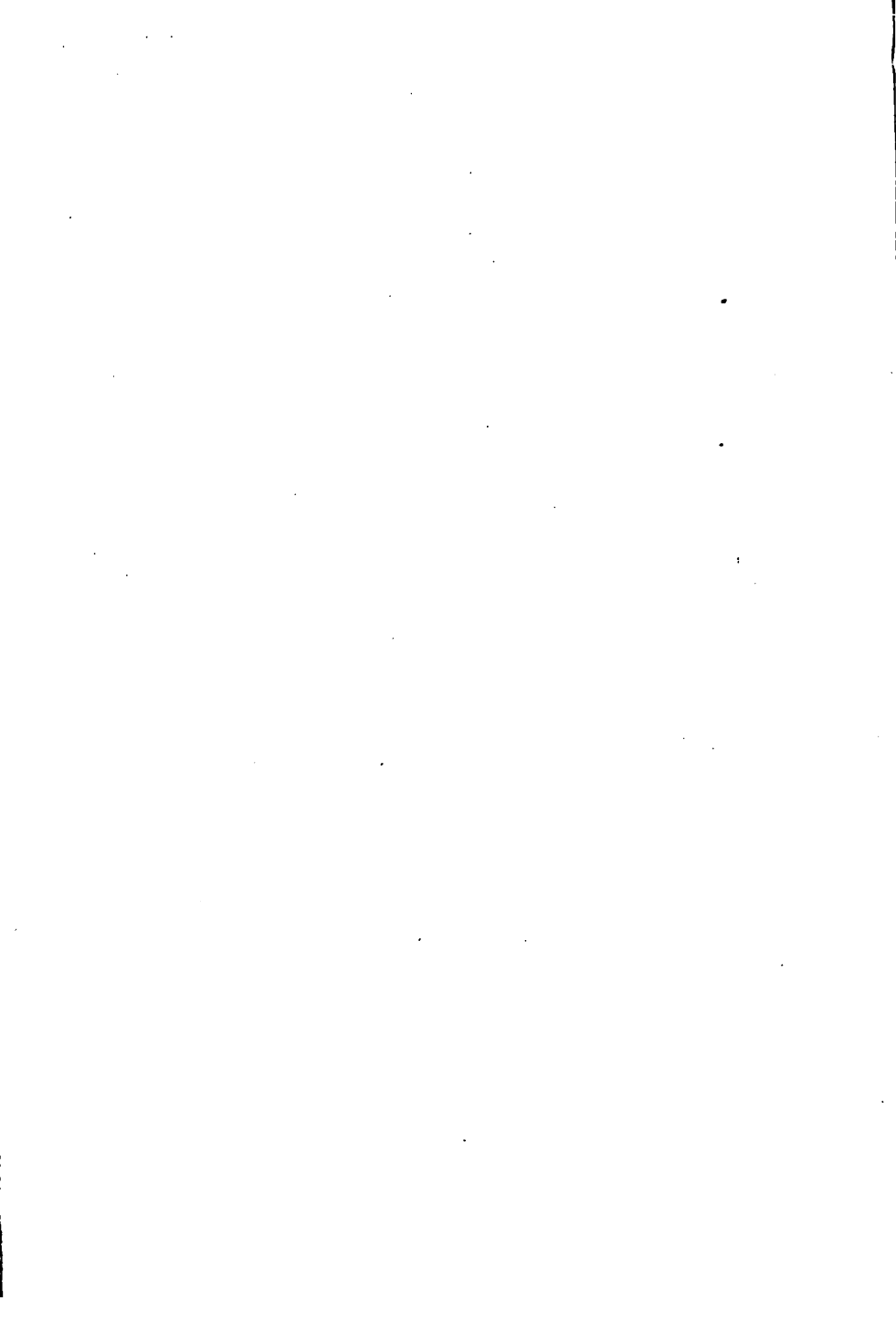
W . G . Johnston .

28 July 1916.

MacGregor
NCW



THE SOUTER'S LAMP



The
Souter's Lamp

BY
HECTOR MAC GREGOR:



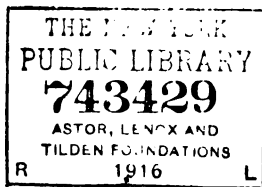
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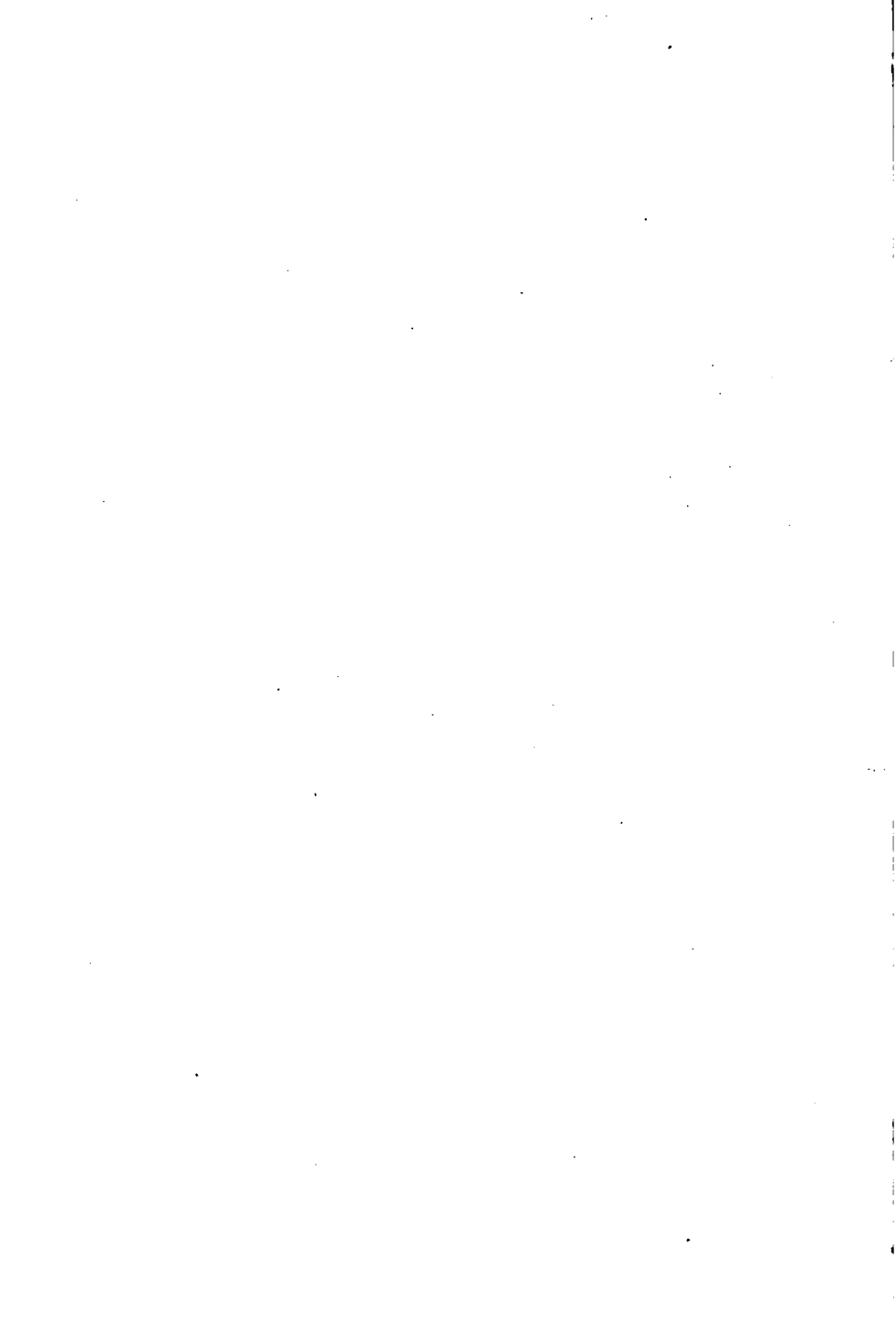
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(August)



Chicago: 63 Washington Street
New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Toronto: 27 Richmond Street, W
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 30 St. Mary Street

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THE SOUTER'S LAMP



THE SOUTER'S LAMP

THE Glen folk liked to appear in their new boots for the first time at the Kirk. This made Saturday the Souter's busiest day. But the week's work was generally finished by eight o'clock on Saturday evening. The Souter liked a quiet talk, and Saturday evening was the time when people had an hour to spare. Between eight and ten o'clock there were usually three or four cronies seated about the kitchen ingle.

As the big clock, which choked the passage between the room and the kitchen, rumbled out the strokes of eight, the Souter rose from his bench with a sigh of relief. He first swept the week's clippings into a corner, and then hung his apron on a nail behind the door. His wife came in when she heard him stirring, and took the boots that were to be called for into the kitchen. At a quarter past eight, after he had washed his face and hands in the tub that stood outside the kitchen door and caught the water off the roof, the Souter carried the big lamp in from the workshop and hung it carefully on the knob of the kitchen window shutter.

The lamp was a signal to the cronies who were waiting about outside. They knew that the Souter

had finished his week's work, and was ready for a quiet talk.

The Beadle was the first to arrive. He was "just passin'," and needed some pressing before he would consent to sit down. It was generally ten o'clock before he rose to leave, but he always professed to be surprised that "the nicht had slippit awa' so quick."

The talk in the kitchen covered a good many subjects. But the Minister's Love Story was the thing the cronies liked best to hear. It needed care to draw it from the Souter's lips, but long practice had taught them how to go about it.

"I've been working in the Kirk-yaird a' day," the Beadle began.

"Ye divna work on Setterday, div ye, Tammas?"

"I be'd t' work th' day, at onyrate. The Minister has been cryin' to me aboot a grave atween the yew trees in the east corner for a month back, an' I couldna face him the morn withoot makin' it decent like."

"That'll be Jeannie McIntosh's grave, is it?"

"Ay, that's the name on the heid-stane, altho' it's no' easy made oot. It maun be near forty year auld. They're sayin' there was somethin' betwixt the lassie and Maister Carment when he cam' to the Glen first."

"Fouk maun aye clash about somethin'," the Souter growled. "There's no' mony ootside the Kirk-yaird that ken muckle aboot what was ga'en on in Glen Brearachan forty year syne."

"Na, na, he wasna put past her. But Jeannie wadna hev him."

"*Wadna hev him!* Keep me! I didna think the lass was cradled that could say no to a minister," the Beadle cried, in feigned astonishment.

"Jeannie wadna hev him," the Souter continued. "She didna think that she was fit to be a minister's wife."

"Hoo did ye come by that, John?"

"I got it frae Mysie, Rob McIntosh's sister. Mysie keepit hoose for Rob ever since his wife died. She was an auld, half-demented body that naebody took much thocht o'. Maister Carment used to speak to Jeannie without heedn' if Mysie was near han'. But the cratur heard mair than they kent o', an' she tellt me since aboot some words she heard passin' between them. The Minister pressed the lassie sair, but she wadna gie in. When he tellt her o' his love she aye answered back t' him—'I canna be your wife, sir, I'm no fit to gang t' the Manse. It's a leddy ye'll need to mairry, no' a fairm lassie like me. Dinna speak o't mair, Maister Carment.'"

The Souter lay back in his chair, as if his story had come to an end. But the cronies were not to be deceived. They knew that the best had still to be told.

"An' hoo did the lassie come by her deith so soon?" the Beadle innocently asked. "The heid-stane mak's her barely twenty-one."

"Weel, that's a waesome story," the Souter

answered, in slow and lowered tones, as he leant forward in his chair again. "I canna speak o't yet without feelin' a grip in ma throat.

"It was in '28 that it cam' about, just a year an' seven months after Maister Carment was settled in the Glen. Rob McIntosh cam' doon in his dog-cairt to the feein' market. It was held then, as it is still, in the back end of October. The snaw was lyin' on the ground near a foot deep, an' it lookit as if there micht be anither storm afore the day was ower. Rob wasna aye carefu' wi' the drink, an' Jeannie trampit doon about five o'clock in the forenicht to try an' get him hame. But it was near eight afore she got him oot o' the inn parlour, an' the snaw was beginnin' to come doon again when they took the road. I never heard hoo it happened, but just as they were passin' through Kinnaird, the mare fell an' broke one o' her legs. Jeannie wanted to bide wi' Mrs. Sim till mornin', but Rob had enough drink in him to mak' him dour, an' he wadna be guided. Naething wad do for him but to tramp hame, and sair against her judgment, Jeannie gaed wi' him. She kent it was a daft-like thing to tak' the muir road on siccan a nicht, but she wadna let her faither gang his lane.

"About ten o'clock the Minister gied the wife and me a cry. He had been to Dunkeld, to the Presbytery, an' had just come aff the coach. He speired about one or two ither things first, an' then askit if Rob McIntosh had been doon at the market.

"I was tellin' him hoo the lassie an' her faither gaed aff, when Peter Sim happened to come in for a pair

o' boots I was patchin' for him. It was him that tellt about the mare, an' the wy Rob an' his dochter took the road on foot. I'll mind the look the Minister took on till the day o' my deith. If I hadna kent it afore, I could hev seen then that he lo'ed the lassie wi' a' his he'rt. He hurried awa' hame as if he didna ken what to say. Aboot an oor afterwards, as I was startin' to tak aff my claes, I heard a chap at the door. I keekit through th' window, and saw that it was Maister Carment back again.

"'Will ye come wi' me, John?' he askit, when I got the door open. 'I canna rest wi' the thocht o' that lassie on the muir on sich a nicht.' 'I'll gang wi' ye, sir, surely,' says I, 'but ye're no' goin' to tramp it, are ye?'

"'No,' says he, 'I've got the dog-cairt at the end o' the lane. We'll run up in little ower an oor's time.'

"The horse wasna steppin' that could hev done the five miles that nicht in less than twa oors. The snaw was fa'in' so thick that we couldna see the road whiles, and didna ken where we were gaun'. It's my belief we wad never hev got to Dalnagarran at all if the Minister's mare hadna kent the way so weel hersel'.

"It was near two in the mornin' when we reached the hoose. Mysie was sittin' ower the kitchen fire singin' a waesome sang to hersel', an' there was no word o' Rob or Jeannie. Maister Carment's face got as white as the snaw itsel' when he found they werna hame. I couldna keep the tears back when I saw him in the licht o' the lamp. He wasna

answered, in slow and lowered tones, as he moved forward in his chair again. "I canna speak o't without feelin' a grip in ma throat.

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to carry her hame. He was a strong man in thae days, Maister Carment. There wasna the like o' him in the parish.

"I gaed ower mysel' to Pittaraig, which wasna mair than half-a-mile aff, an' got the McCraws to come an' cairry Rob's body hame. It was five in the mornin' afore we got to Dalnagarran."

"The lassie never cam' roond again, did she?" the Beadle enquired.

"Ay, she cam' roond. She lived for near a week. But the cauld had got sich a grip o' her that Dr. Irvine said from the first she couldna win through."

"I mind weel," the Souter continued, "the day she died. There was naebody in the room but Mysie, an' Maister Carment an' masel'. The Minister wad hardly leave her for a meenit, an' he didna mind aboot me bein' in the room. There's been few secrets atween him an' me since the nicht we faced the storm an' the Bodagh thegither.

"The lassie cam' t' hersel' a bit in the forenicht. She put her airms roond the Minister's neck an' lay on his breist like a bairn.

"'I couldna be your wife, Maister Carment,' says she. 'I wasna fit to gang to the Manse.'

"'But ye lo'ed me, Jeannie, did ye no?'" the Minister cried.

"'Ay, I lo'ed ye wi' a' my he'rt, Wullie,' says she. 'It was my love that wadna let me mairry ye.'

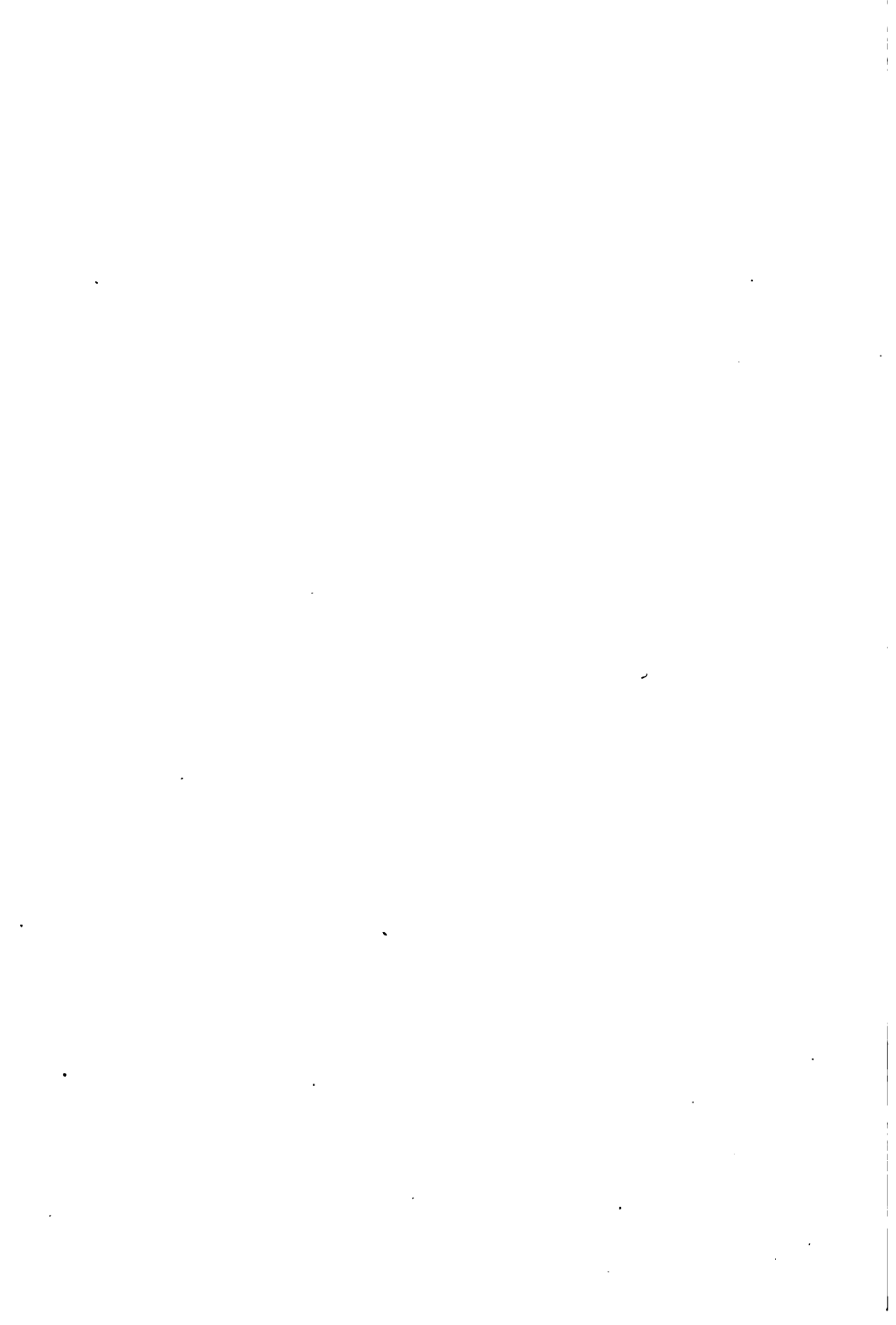
"There were some mair words between them, but I couldna mak' them oot. In a few meenits Jeannie was lyin' deid in the Minister's airms."

"I canna get ower the lassie ca'in Maister Carment *Wullie*," the Beadle exclaimed.

"The lassie was decin' when she ca'ed the Minister Wullie, ye'll mind, Tammas. It's a wonderfu' thing deith. It lifts a body abune this warld a'thegither. Jeannie was drawin' near the Faither's hoose. She wad soon be wearin' the white robe o' a King's dochter. She could ca' Maister Carment by his first name then. In the glory o' deith she was mair than his equal."

The Beadle could scarcely appreciate the Souter's explanation. But the cronies were touched to the heart by the story of their grave old Minister's youthful love.

THE
PLACING OF TAMMAS RATTRAY
BEADLE AND GRAVE-DIGGER



THE PLACING OF TAMMAS RATTRAY BEADLE AND GRAVE-DIGGER

I

THE three-weeks' frost had been threatening to break up all day, and, when the sun went down behind Craigbrack, between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, a northeast wind brought the snow across in a succession of wet, biting blizzards.

Other people were glad to hug their own firesides, but snow and wind would never keep Willie McPherson or Rob Dow from the enjoyment of their Saturday evening crack in the red glow of the Souter's hospitable peats. By opposite roads they reached the honeysuckle hedge on the north side of the narrow flower-garden, just as the long clock in Mrs. Sturrock's front passage was sounding the warning skirr at five minutes to eight.

"Is that yersel', Wullie?" the Cooper asked, as he identified his friend with some difficulty, under a big woollen Tam o' Shanter that was drawn closely down over his ears.

"Ay, man, Rob, it's just me, but I wadna expect to be seein' you aboot a clorty (dirty) nicht like this."

The foregathering of the Cooper and the Edradour

ploughman, at the Souter's gate on a Saturday night, was as certain as the going down of the sun. The one would have made sure that something was wrong if the other failed him at the accustomed spot, and the usual hour; but, with the mysteriousness characteristic of their blood, they both pretended to regard their meeting as a thing wholly arranged by chance. And when the minutes drew out into half an hour, and there was still no sign of the lamp in the window, which they had learned to accept as their host's beacon of welcome to the comfort and crack of his cozy kitchen, they never confessed to any feeling of disappointment. They did not even allow to each other that a purpose of visiting the Souter had been in their minds at all.

"It'll be near time for me to be takin' the road," and Willie began to pull up a big "turnip" watch out of his left trousers pocket, as if he were lifting the bucket in Balnakeilly's draw well.

"Ay, it canna be muckle short o' nine o'clock," the Cooper answered, vigorously stamping the snow off his boots as he was speaking, under pretense of preparing for his two-mile walk to the top of the Glen. He was glad of a chance to get his feet warmed without having to confess that he suffered from the cold.

As the two men shifted about from one foot to the other, trying to make up their minds to go home, but unwilling to lose the possible chance of even a late crack, a thin streak of yellow light fell across the mirk, about twenty yards below the spot where they were standing. Neither of them gave any sign of having

noticed that the Souter's lamp had at last been hung on the knob of the kitchen window shutter. But, after he had lowered his watch into his trousers pocket again by the thin triple chain that showed only a two-inch loop below the edge of his waist-coat, although it was twisted three times round his neck, Willie intimated, with a fine feint of indifference in his tones, that he thought he would "just gie the Souter a cry before takin' the road."

"Weel, it's a bit late," and the Cooper seemed to be trying to compel himself towards something that was hardly to his mind, "but I'll mebbe gang in masel' to speak a new pair o' boots. The anes I'm wearin' 'll no' haud the thou oot lang."

John Sturrock was in the act of puffing vigorously at a new cutty when the cronies opened the kitchen door. A new cutty on Saturday night, when his week's work was done, was the only luxury he was known to indulge in. And it could scarcely have been described as an extravagance, for the cutty was generally thrown in as a "fairin'," in lieu of the usual farthing biscuit, when Mrs. Sturrock had completed her week's purchases at the postmaster's shop. The Souter always looked for the cutty in a corner of the sink, when he came into the kitchen on Saturday night from the smoky lean-to workshop behind the back door. His wife never forgot to stand it stalk downwards, at a quarter to eight o'clock, in about two inches of warm water. The Souter liked to have the stickiness taken off the mouthpiece, but it was a sore trial to his temper when he found that the cutty had

slipped down and got its bowl filled with water. Under such circumstances it was considered unfit for use, and the newly pensioned pipe of the week before had to be gloomily pressed into a further term of service.

"Ye're late th' nicht, John," the Cooper began.

The cutty was not out of danger yet, and the Souter puffed on strenuously for a moment or two before making any reply. When the dottle had settled into a steady red glow, and the smoke began to come out in long, regular clouds, he ventured to take the pipe out of his mouth. There was the gleam of quiet triumph in his eye which is understood only by those who have overcome the fixed resistance to illumination that a new cutty is in the habit of offering.

"Ay," he answered, "I'm later than ord'nar' th' nicht. Marjory Cameron's funeral put me back wi' ma work th' day."

"An' sma' wonder either!" Willie McPherson interjevted. "If yon Beadle body puts a face in here th' nicht, I'll be for gi'en him the rough side o' ma tongue."

"What ails ye at Tammas, Wullie?" the Souter asked in some surprise.

"Ails me! What garred the cratur keep us a' stan'-in' in the cauld Kirk-yaird for near an oor when he micht hev got through wi' the job in ten meenits? Ye wad think from the wy he was dreeblin' the earth in that it was a leevin' sowl he was beeryin' in place o' a corp. I'll be whuppit if he doesna tak' a pleasure

in makin' fouk bide in the smell o' the mools as lang's he can haud them. Fashious body!"

The ploughman was commonly understood to be somewhat short in the temper; but the first touch of thaw after a long frost will try the best of dispositions.

"Ay, Tammas didna just hurry himsel' th' day, but," and the Souter's tones suggested more than he actually said, "dinna ye be ower hasty, Wullie. There's mair princible in the Beadle than ye'll be thinkin'."

"There's nae doot," Rob Dow insisted, "'at Tammas is a man o' princible. But ye'll alloo it's no' aye an easy thing to mak' him oot. There's whiles he'll be as pleasant and free as a body could wish, but there's other times he's that cankered an' thrawn-like he doesna seem to be himsel' at a'. A'body kens that he winna aye stop at the second gill, but it's no' the drink that mak's him gang aboot for days thegither wi' his mooth shut an' a look on his face that's hardly canny. I canna place Tammas. He's no' like othér fouk; I canna place him no wy."

"Mebbe ye wad learn t' place him if ye kent as muckle aboot Tammas Rattray as I div, Rob."

The Souter's way of replying to Rob Dow's criticism of the Beadle clearly suggested a story that would be worth hearing. But the cronies knew his mood, and they left him to smoke his pipe for a few minutes in speechless peace. When the clouds began to get gradually thinner, they knew that the old man's mind was working back upon the memories of other days, and when he took the cutty from his mouth, and laid it carefully down on the rough stone shelf that abutted

from the wall of the chimney into the wide fireplace, they hitched their chairs an inch or two nearer the peats. It was clear that the Souter intended to give them the placing of Tammas Rattray.

"Ye were complainin' about the Beadle dreeblin' the mould into Marjory Cameron's grave, Wullie," he began.

"Ye'll no' deny he took his ain time till't th' day, John."

"Ay, as I wes sayin', he didna fash himsel' ower it. But there's a queer kind o' story behind it that few people ken ocht aboot, an' if I be tellin' it t' ye it'll mebbe no gar ye think ony the waur o' Tammas.

"Five an' thirty year back, as near as I can mind, Tammas lost th' wife wi' th' fever. She was a fine, buxom lass o' three or fower an' twenty, an' he was terrible ta'en up wi' her. It was just peetifu' to see him in the Kirk-yaird wi' his wee bit bairnie greetin' at his side like t' break her he'rt. She's a sonsy woman now, Elsie, an' th' mither o' eicht strappin' sons an' dochters—it's her that's merried on the Duke's keeper at Blair—but she wesna mair than five year auld when she stood wi' her faither at the head o' her mither's grave.

"Weel, as I wes sayin', it near made a body greet to look at the waesome face Tammas had on him. He wes awfu' puttin' aboot, an' if I hedna keepit a grip o' his airm, it's my belief he wad hev fa'en in ower the top o' the coffin. But, when Sandy Duff took a haud o' the spade to fill in the mould, he kind o' straichtened himsel' up. Howkin' an' fillin' graves

wes his ain trade, ye see, an' he be'd t' tak' an interest in it even when it wes his ain wife 'at had to be beeried.

"Sandy wesna used wi' the job. The first spadefu' that he threw fell on the lid o' the coffin wi' a great thumpin' clap. I was just goin' to bid him ca' canny when Tammas lat oot a wild skreich an' loupit clean across the open grave. Afore onybody could see what the body was efter he grippit the spade oot o' Sandy's han's, an' started to fill the grave himsel'. His face wes as white's the snaw, an' there wes a look in his eyes that wesna a'thegither canny, but he dreebled the earth in that soft like, ye wad hardly hear it strikin' the coffin ava.

"Since syne Tammas has aye been unco' carefu' in his wy o' fillin' a grave. We wad see how auld Peter Cameron was shakin' an' tryin' t' keep frae greetin' as we were puttin' his ae dochter amang the mools th' day. He's left his lane noo, for it's fifteen year since his wife was ta'en. A sma' thing micht hev put the puir auld body clean oot o' his judgment. The Beadle kent that weel, an' he minded hoo his ain feelin's had been hurt wi' the clap o' the earth on the lid o' his wife's coffin. It wes that made him so extraord'nar' slow th' day. The syle was hard an' lumpy wi' th' frost, an' he broke it doon wi' the spade afore he dreebled it into the grave. Some o' ye were gettin' a bit fashious ower the time he wes takin', but I kent fine masel' what was workin' in the body's he'rt. He's a feelin' man, Tammas Ratray, an' I wasna expectin' t'

see him here the nicht. He'll be in one o' his waesome fits the noo', I'm thinkin'."

The Souter took his cutty up again, and began to rake out a piece of red peat from the fire.

"Dod, I'm gled I didna get a chance to say an ill word to the body!" Willie McPherson exclaimed with conscience-stricken vehemence.

"Ay, he's a feelin' man, Tammas, as ye were sayin', John," the Cooper added heartily, "but he's surely got the better o' his wife's deith noo, hes he no'?"

"Weel," the Souter continued, between the puffs of his pipe, "I hardly think it. But mebbe ye wad like t' hear the rest o' the story?"

II.

THE faces of the listeners instantly brightened. They knew their host's habit. He had a way of seeming to finish a tale, and, when they were beginning to exclaim upon it, he would add something that generally proved to be the most toothsome bit of the whole.

"Aboot five o'clock in the forenicht," he resumed, "efter I had ta'en ma black claes aff and was steppin' through the back door t' get to ma work'again, I seen Tammas, wi' the Buik under his oxter, hurryin' through the Minister's neeps as fast as his bow legs could cairry him. I thocht it strange like to see a man ootbye little more than two oors efter his wife had been happit in her grave. But I didna just bother masel' aboot it. I kent he was in the wy o' takin' the Buik hame wi' him whiles when some o' the leaves needed pastin', and, although it wasna his ain road he was traiv'lin', it never cam' into ma mind that there was anything byord'nar' aboot him. He wad be on the glebe two or three times in the day lookin' for a bit nannie-goat that was aye seekin' t' get to the neeps, and I didna doot but what that wes the errand that took him frae the hoose. Even if it's only a dumb beast that's dependin' on him, a body maun'na forget the leevin' when he's grievin' for the deid.

"The maitter wes oot o' ma mind althegither when

little Elsie cam' roond roarin' an' greetin', aboot eient o'clock, t' tell us that her faither hed never come hame. I wes that astonished I didna ken what t' say till't. But the wife put the bairn to sleep in her ain bed an' I gaed through the Glen wi' twa o' the neebours t' see if we could get word o' Tammass at any o' his houffs (places of call). We couldna fa' in wi' onybody that hed seen a sicht o' him, an' when we got back, about half-twelve, I was fair bate t' think what could hev come ower the cratur. But there wes naething mair to be done that nicht, an' we let the maitter rest till mornin'.

"As early as five o'clock three o' us gaed up the burnside to the muir and ower by the Gower Craigs. Tammass wes often goin' there when work wesna thrang wi' him. Ye'll mind hoo he speaks, whiles, o' the queer things that come into his heid when he'll be lyin' up on the Craigs his lane, lookin' at the blue lift an' hearkenin' to the winds soughin' through the branches o' the firs.

"Weel, I hed it in ma mind that we wad licht on Tammass somewhere about the Craig o' Gower. Sure enough, as soon's we got roond t' the path that tak's ye up the face on the Killiecrankie side, there he wes! —as big as the breeks o' him wad haud! My certiel it wes a sicht for sair een. He wes stan'in' on a big boss o' stane, as near to us as from here to the end o' the gairden, flingin' his airms in the air, an' cryin' oot at the top o' his voice the queerest kind o' discourse I ever hearkened till.

"Some o' it I'll mind t' ma dyin' day—it wes des-

perate affeckin'—'Puir little red-breist,' says he, 'ye're cryin' for yer mate, but she'll never come back t' ye again. Hawkie has got her in his claws, an' he's pykin' her he'rt oot wi' his cruel beak, doon by the waterside where the two o' ye made it up thegither in the licht o' an April mornin'. Fower wee birdies are cawin' in the nest wi' the hunger an' the cauld, but they'll a' be quiet afore the sun is oot a' sicht. They'll be as quiet as their mither is th' noo, an' when the dark comes ye'll be left yer lane. Sing yer waesome sang, Robin; it'll rise aboon the trees an' the craigs an' the clouds till it gets to the blue lift. An' the'll be ithers there o' the same sort to keep it company. The smell o' the bonnie bit floer that the muckle stirk hes killed wi' his heavy hoof—it'll be traiv'llin' the same road on the wings o' the sang ye're singin'. An' there's the dool o' men an' women an' bairns too, risin' up day an' nicht like the reek o' a *saunach* (bonfire) bigger than Ben Nevis. They're a' there in the blue thegither, an' they're joinin' in ae waesome coronach. Ochone, the peety o't! But mebbe He'll kep it in His big he'rt—Him 'at lo'ed men an' weemen an' bairns, forbye the birdies an' the floers! Mebbe He'll put it t' anither tune, an' bring it a' oot richt in the land ayont the lift!

"There wes a hantle mair I couldna put sense into no wy. But I gaithered 'at he was makin' a kind o' hime oot o't a' in praise o' the Almichty, for the Buik wes lyin' open at his feet, an' he wad cry a verse frae it whiles in the middle o' his discoorse.

"The three o' us stood hearkenin' fer mebbe ten

meenits, an' syne I gaed forrit a bit an' cried t' him to come doon. But the instant he heard me speakin' he lifted the Buik in his two han's an' skelpit up the face o' the Craig as quick as a weasel. We tried to mak' up on him, but high an' low there wasna a sicht o' him to be seen. For three or fower oors we kept searchin' among the rocks, but we kent brawly we wad never find him if he didna want to be caught, for there wasna one o' us 'at could traivel the Craigs like Tammas. I wasna feared to let him be for anither day, for I wes sure he wed find his road to the shepherd's hut on the west side when he cam' t' himsel' a bit. Him an' Neil Dysart were auld cronies, an' I hed a thocht that it wad mebbe be the best thing he could do to bide on the Craig till he got settled in his mind a wee.

"The next mornin' the three o' us gaed back to the Gower Craigs, wi' a plan for gettin' upsides wi' the Beadle 'at Maister Carment put into oor heids. We carried little Elsie in oor airms, an' we were to try if we couldna put the bairn to catch her faither without lettin' him see there wes ither fouk about.

"It wes the Sabbath day, an' when we got to the place where we seen Tammas the mornin' afore, the ten o'clock bell was ringin' frae the Kirk steeple. There he wes again in the same spot! But he wasna stan'in' up or cryin' oot this time. He wes sittin' wi' the Buik open on his knees, restin' his heid on his han's, an' lookin' the road o' the Kirk as if he wes hearkenin' to the bell. We creeped upon our han's an' knees to the back o' a rock aboot twenty yairds from the boss 'at

Tammas hed made into a kind o' pulpit. Noo wes oor time! The bairn had been lairned what t' say, an' we put her stan'in' oot on the rock where her faither wad see her when she started to speak, but we kept hunkerin' doon on the low side oorsels so's he wadna think there wes ither fouk about.

"If the lassie had been a play-actress she couldna hev done her pairt better. She held oot her wee han's an' cried in a waesome wy—

"'Father, come awa' quick. It's the Sabbath day, an' the Minister's waitin' for the Buik.'

"The three o' us were keekin' ower the top o' the rock t' see what the puir, demented cratur wad dae. He turned roond as quick as lichtenin', an' glowered at the bairnie for a meenit withoot movin' from his place or speakin' a word. Syne, he rose from the grund an' cam' steppin' slowly doon to the rock where she wes stan'in'.

"'The Sabbath day—the Minister's waitin' for the Buik—keep me!' we heard him sayin' t' himsel' two or three times, like a body skeered oot o' his sleep of a sudden like.

"When he got upsides wi' the bairn the judgment seemed t' come back t' him in a moment. He lifted her up in his airms an' began to greet ower her bonnie wee face fit to break his he'rt.

"We lat him be for a while an' when he got a bit quieter the three o' us climbed the rock thegither. But Tammas didna seem the least surprised to see us. He was as sensible like as he is th' day; only he was terrible wasted an' silly (weakly), an' it took the ither

two an' masel' as much as we could do to get him an' the lassie hame.

"From that day to this Tammas hes been the man ye see for yersel's. Sometimes he'll tak' a kind o' turn that sends him wanderin' on the Craigs from daylight till dark, but he aye comes back the better for't. I'm thinkin' the Almichty hes gi'en him eyes to see mair in the rocks an' the flooers an' the lift, an' ears to hear mair in the singin' o' the birdies, an' the rowin' o' the burns, than ither foup ken aboot. A day on the Craigs 'll work the trouble oot o' his mind when its pressin' him ower sair.

"There's some, ye see"—the Souter added in his gravest tones—"at can get comfort wi' anither wife if the Lord tak's frae them the lass they merried in their twenties. I'm one o' that kind masel'; an' I'm thinkin', whiles, if them aboon kens what's gaun' on below, there's naebody better pleased at the peace the guidwife there is puttin' into my auld days than the lass I laid in the Kirk-yaird fifty year back.

"But there's ithers the world canna comfort again if they lose the lassie 'at cam' t' them in the early days o' love. Tammas Rattray is one o' that sort, an' mebbe, as he said himsel', it'll a' come oot richt in the land ayont the lift."

For some minutes there was not a sound to be heard in Mrs. Sturrock's kitchen, except the regular click of her own knitting-needles and the rumbling of the eight-day clock behind the door.

"Ay, ay," said Rob Dow, breaking the silence as he began to think of the walk home, "ye've placed

Tammas for us noo, Souter. He's a man o' prenciple."

"An' a feelin' body, forbye," the Ploughman added, with a heartiness that was intended to atone for his former misjudging of the Beadle's conduct.

MR. CARMENT'S NEW PRAYER

MR. CARMENT'S NEW PRAYER

"GEORDIE, dinna mak' a noise! Coorie doon when ye're passin' the parlor window!"

Geordie McCallum paused for a moment with his fingers on the sneck of the Manse gate. He could see nobody, but he knew that the command which had come to him in a loud whisper was from Rob Carment. With the instinctive loyalty only to be found among boys, he obeyed the order, and crept softly up the garden path, bending down as he passed below the parlor window so that no one might see him from within. When he reached the back-yard he found Rob waiting for him on the top of the water barrel, from which point of vantage he had been watching his progress from the burn at the angle of the turnip field up to the Manse gate.

"What's wrang wi' ye?" he asked. For Geordie had the freedom of the Manse, and had not been accustomed to skulk under the windows like a criminal.

"There's naethin' wrang. But they're at fem'ly worship, and I dinna want them to ken I'm ootbye."

"Hoo are ye no' there yersel'?" Geordie inquired in deep astonishment. To be able to escape from family worship at the Manse seemed something like a miracle to him.

"I *am* there. At ony rate I *wes* there, but I slippit

oot when Uncle Wullie got started wi' the prayer. He tak's a quarter o' an oor till't, and I'll be back afore he's through. But we maun'na be pittin' aff time. Hev ye gotten the mappy wi' ye?"

"Ay, here it's," and Geordie drew a little slate colored rabbit out of the leather school-bag that hung over his left shoulder.

"Eh, losh, its bonnie!" Rob exclaimed in unrestrained admiration as he took the mappy out of his friend's hands and began to stroke its long, soft ears. "I'll gie ye my knife and a dizen o' bools for't. Will ye swap?"

"Ay, I'll swap. But ye promised me ane o' yer white anes when it's auld enough to leave its mither, forbye the knife and the bools."

Geordie never allowed friendship to interfere with business.

"Ye'll get a whitey too, if ye like. They'll be ready afore a fortnicht. Come roond and help's t' pit this ane in the box."

The boys were busy about the mappies, when Rob suddenly broke away from his friend and darted towards the back door.

"I'll hae to rin in and see where they are," he cried as he was disappearing round the end of the stable. After an absence of about half a minute he was back at the mappies again.

"It's a' richt," he explained. "Uncle Wullie's only half through. He's at—'Have mercy on the heathen in their blindness bowin' down to stocks and stones. Enlighten the dark places o' the earth, which are still

the abodes o' wull worship, supersteection, and horrid cruelty.' It'll tak' him near six meenits t' feenish. There's plenty time."

Rob's imitation of his uncle's tones made Geordie open his eyes. He scarcely knew whether his friend's profanity ought to be admired or deplored. But there was no time to discuss things then. The six minutes would soon pass.

Rob shut the slatey into the special box he had spent a whole Saturday in making, and in about five minutes after his last excursion, he hurried back to listen at the parlor-door again.

"Shut the big kist, Geordie," he trumpeted in a whisper through his hands on his return. Time was precious now, and he could not trust himself to go farther than the kitchen door. "I'll hae t' gang in. He'll be upsides wi' the Jews in a meenit, and syne there's naethin' but the Queen and the High Coort o' Perlyment."

Rob got back to the parlor in time to settle himself devoutly on his knees just as Mr. Carment was finishing the last sentence of his prayer. But the boy was a little astray in his calculations that morning. He had drawn one foot gently up again where the "Amen" should have come in, so that no time might be lost in getting back to Geordie and the mappies. But Mr. Carment did not say "Amen" in the usual place. At the prayer, which Rob had never known to be varied, he paused for a second or two and then added in a softened voice this new petition—"O Lord Jesus, be gracious to one who has trusted and loved Thee in the

face of much discouragement. Hearken to her prayer and spare the life of her only son. And if we have offended one of Thy little ones, forgive us, for Thy mercy's sake, Amen."

Rob rose quietly from his knees with a new feeling of awe in his heart that he could not have explained. He stole a quick glance at the Minister's face. The thin lips trembled, and there were tears in the kind gray eyes.

"What's wrang wi' Uncle Wullie?" he whispered to Janet McCormick, when they had withdrawn from the room and were standing in the passage behind the parlör door.

"I canna tell ye, laddie," the housekeeper replied in a troubled voice. "Maister Carment maun hae somethin' on his mind. We'll hear aboot it, efter a bit, may be."

If Janet McCormick had known how the Minister spent the evening before his new prayer was spoken, she would have understood what it meant. Between seven and eight o'clock he was passing through the little village of Tomnamoan, which lay about a mile and a-half to the west of the Kirk. Eppie Scott ran out to tell him that the woman who lived "through the wa'" from her was in deep trouble. Her son was ill with fever, and the doctor gave little hope of his life. Mr. Carment hesitated. He had never crossed the threshold of Ellen Fleming's cottage since this son was born, more than sixteen years before. There was no one in the Glen who had a kinder heart, or was less likely to cherish an ill-feeling against any human

being. But a sense of sacred duty seemed to make it imperative that he should let the ban of the Church lie upon this woman until she professed penitence for her sin, in the form prescribed by the usage of three centuries. The Minister's hesitation did not last for more than a moment. He could not pass the door of any human creature who was in distress.

It was a dark night, and Ellen came to the door at the Minister's knock with a candle in her hand.

"Maister Carment!" she exclaimed when she saw who her visitor was. "Is that yersel'?"

"Ay, Ellen, it's me. I am sorry to hear John has taken the fever so badly. Will you let me come in and see how he's doing?"

"Come in, sir, and thank you kindly. I wasna lookin' for a veesit."

She struggled hard to keep the tears back, but her voice betrayed the feeling that was working in her heart. As she led the way "ben" where the boy was lying in a restless sleep, the Minister could see by the light of the candle that her hard, weather-beaten face was lined with suffering.

"I couldn't pass your door when you were in trouble, Ellen," Mr. Carment began. "I felt that I must come in and try to comfort you. Are ye finding it hard to bear?"

"Oh, sir," the woman cried in a great outburst of the grief that had been storing itself in her heart for years, "why did ye no' come afore? It's been a wae-some, lonely time, and there's few that's gien me a kind look or a guid word, altho' I've been tryin' hard

to dae what's richt. I wad hae tell't ye everything. I wes only a bit lassie then, and if I did wrang, ye dinna ken hoo sairly I wes mishan'ld. But I couldna gang afore the *Sayshion*, I couldna dae't. Ye shouldna hae made the wy so hard, sir. The Maister wouldna hev done it Himsel'. The puir body that cam t' Him aff the streets and washed His feet wi' her tears wasna *Sayshioned*. And I gaed straight t' Him, Maister Carment, altho' I couldna gang t' the Kirk. He's forgi'en me lang syne, and He's helpit me wi' my burden a' th' lonesome years. The doctor says my laddie winna get better. But I canna believe 't. The Lord'll no' leave me in the warl' my lane. He kens it's been a sair enough wrastle wi' the laddie t' cheer me, and if he was ta'en—"

Ellen could bear up no longer. She fell on her knees at the bedside of her son and gave herself over to a passion of weeping.

The Minister waited until she had risen from the floor and grown somewhat calm again.

"Ellen," he said, and his voice had a thrill in it that showed how deeply his heart was touched, "I'm afraid I've been very unlike the Master to you. You'll have to speak to Him to have mercy on the Minister when ye're at your prayer to-night."

"Oh, sir, I wadna dare to blame ye. I didna mean ye t' tak' what I said that wy. Ye couldna dae but what ye thocht was richt. A'boday in the Glen kens that. And maybe it was a' for the best."

"Well, well, good-night to you, Ellen. We'll have

more to say about it yet. I see the laddie's sleeping more easily now. Keep to your faith. Come what will, it'll carry you through."

Mr. Carment got into the way of calling in at Ellen Fleming's cottage very frequently. He grew to reverence her as her true character got gradually clear to him. She had kept her spirit sweet and gentle in the midst of her loneliness, and the Minister knew that it must have been a hard thing to do.

After a sore struggle the boy began to recover, and in six weeks he was fairly convalescent. Mr. Carment met him one afternoon walking with his mother round the Black Knoll about a mile to the east of Tomnamoan.

"I'm glad to see you getting about again, John," he said. "You'll be able to come to the Kirk on Sabbath eight days."

"But that's the Saicrament, is it no', Maister Carment?" Ellen inquired.

"Yes, and that's why I want you to come to the Kirk. You'll both come to the table, and we'll all be the better for seeing you there."

"But what'll the *Sayshion* say till't?" Ellen asked, with a return of her old dread.

"The Elders are all anxious to give John and yourself the right hand of fellowship. They're seeing things in a new light now, like myself."

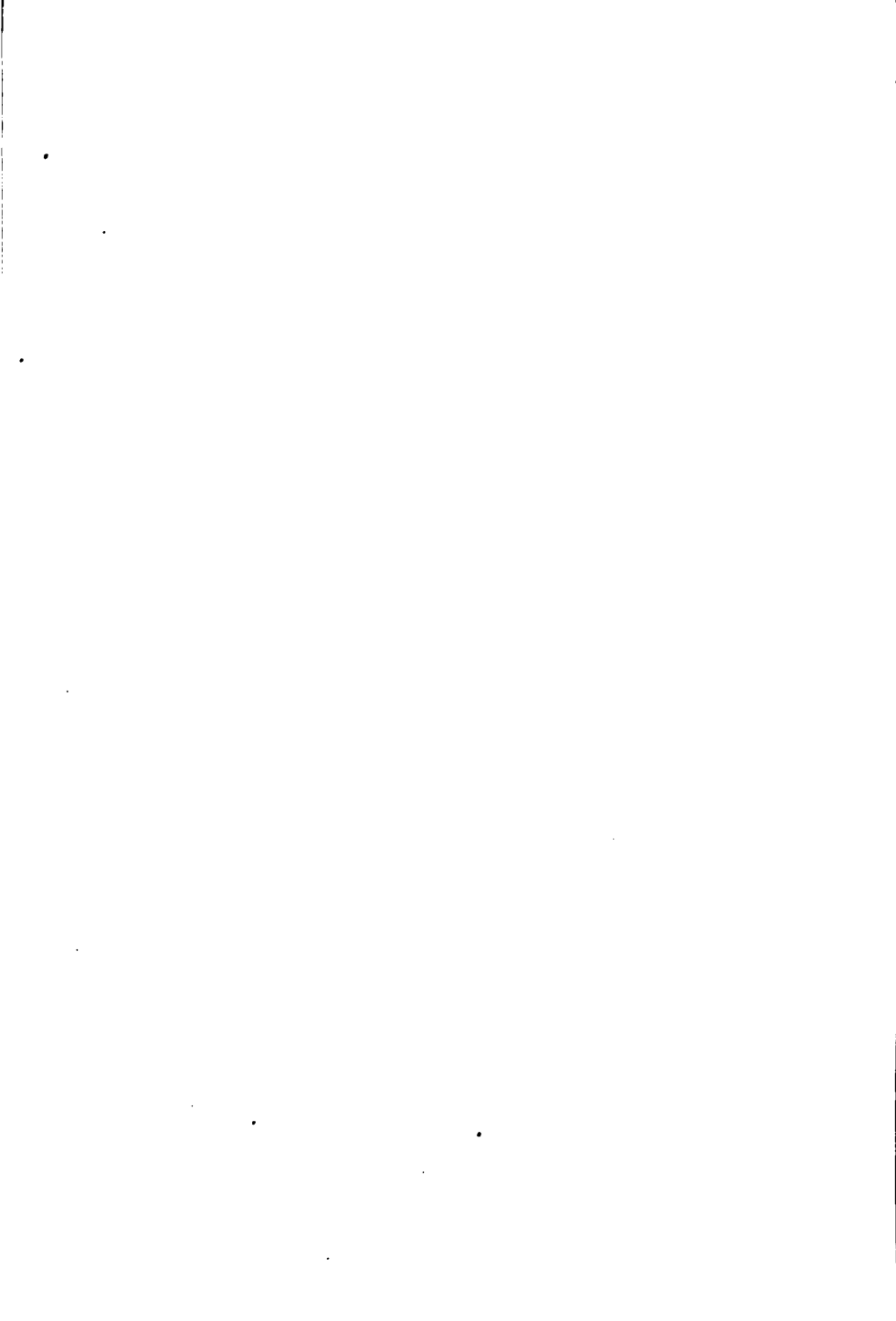
Ellen's eyes filled with tears. "We'll come, Maister Carment," she answered, "an' may the Lord bless ye for yer kindness. It's a new life we're livin' noo, the

laddie an' me. The verra broom smells sweeter than it did."

On the communion Sabbath Ellen Fleming and her son sat in the Manse seat with Janet McCormick. When the Sacrament was about to be dispensed, and as the congregation began to lift the thirty-fifth Paraphrase to "Rockingham's" sweet and solemn strains, they crossed over to the first pew in front of the pulpit and took their places among the communicants.

Ellen's first Sacrament is spoken of in the Glen to this day. No one had ever seen Mr. Carment so deeply stirred. He made the people feel that he had been seeing some things in a new light. When he was giving out the bread and wine he departed a little from his usual custom. Instead of handing them to the Elders to take to the people he carried them himself to the end of the first pew. From the Minister's own hands Ellen Fleming and her son took their first Sacrament. A hush as of death filled the Kirk. There were few eyes that were quite dry; and the older folk felt that the Sacrament had got a deeper meaning for them that day than they had ever seen in it before.

CROOKIT SOL



CROOKIT SOL

CROOKIT SOL was the Dominie's nickname. Nobody could explain how the nickname had been earned, for the Dominie was not crookit. He was one of the biggest and best-built men in the Glen; and Tyree, the carrier, who had long, wiry legs, and was always on the road, was the only man who could keep step with him for more than a mile.

The boys from the East side used to be on the watch about half-past nine in the morning, as they climbed the Lettoch Brae on their way to school. They knew that they needed their time if they were only at the *skechach* (hawthorn) hedge, when the familiar figure stepped out of Jock Dewar's cottage, and began to take the high road at a long, swinging pace. The Dominie had nearly twice their distance to travel, but he was sometimes at the school before them.

It was quite understood that Crookit Sol tried to race the East side boys every morning. To reach the school steps and blow the whistle while they were still pushing up the brae, about a quarter of a mile away, gave him great pleasure. He could welcome the late comers with the tawse; and things did not seem to go properly with Crookit Sol if he had not begun the day by punishing somebody. The

slightest excuse served. He was even known, when there was no just occasion for punishment, to flog some of the boys who were oftenest in his black books, with the object of deterring them from the commission of possible crimes.

The Dominie had a bad temper when he came to the Glen first, and, as years went on, it seemed to grow more and more savage. The tawse was in constant requisition. It was made out of a heavy leather girth-band. One-half was cut into five long fingers, with the points charred to make them bite. The other half was narrowed in towards the centre, and then broadened out at the end again. After many experiments the Dominie had found that this shape gave him the best grip.

Some of the boys were flogged oftener than others. These were not the big farm lads, who came for writing and arithmetic during the long winter months when frost and snow forced them to be idle. Crookit Sol was more than half afraid of them. Besides, the occasional gift of a kebbuck of cheese or a crock of butter had wonderful influence, even on his rough temper. His wrath expended itself commonly upon two or three of the weaker, unfriended boys. There are some such in every school; boys who are outcast from the healthy play and intercourse of their comrades; partly as the result of a twist in their home life; partly because of some weakness in body or mind that makes them timorous or morbid.

The Souter had a theory of his own about Crookit Sol's bad temper. He broached it sometimes to the

cronies as they sucked their cutties round his big peat fire on a Saturday night. The Souter held that the Dominie had been soured by the Lowland forms of speech which had got a home in the Glen. In a Highland parish, as the world knows, people should either talk good Gaelic or the best English. But Glen Brearachan was too near the South Country to be able to keep its speech pure. Lowland words and phrases began to creep into its conversation; and when the railway came to Tullymet, not more than three miles away, the demoralization was completed. Gaelic and English were both hopelessly ruined by an influx of new words and phrases from the South. Three languages got mixed, and each of them lost something in the process of mixing.

The Dominie tried to stem the tide when he came first to the Glen. He used to flog every juvenile corrupter of Gaelic or of English speech without mercy. But the task was beyond him, and, after a few years of desperate struggle, he settled morosely down into an acceptance of what seemed to be inevitable.

This was the Souter's theory about Crookit Sol's bad temper. It was probably inspired by the kindness of a disposition that always tried to think the best about everybody. But it was proof, if proof were needed, that the Dominie had a sour reputation in the Glen, and in wiser folks' thought was generally condemned for the way he took in managing his boys.

Crookit Sol was not always in an evil humor,

however. For one hour of each day he seemed to be changed into another man. After the morning prayer, when the whole school was ranged in a large semicircle round the stove for the Bible lesson, the Dominie's voice softened and the hard lines round his mouth got somehow to be broken up. The short, stubby hair that grew straight out from his head, and seemed to offer perpetual menace to the common peace, like the red comb of a game-cock among the drab-colored fowls of the barn-yard, ceased to vex boyish imagination with bodement of coming calamity.

The tawse was never brought into exercise during the Bible lesson. For that one hour of each school morning it lay harmlessly in the long drawer of the big desk beside the door, among the peeries and pocket-knives and nameless sundries that had been seized from their owners in some moment of unwariness. To one or two of the middle-sized boys a whole hour without risk of "pandies" was like a taste of heaven.

Crookit Sol managed to make the Bible lessons circle round two themes. He was either telling the hero and war stories of the Old Testament, or describing out of the New the agonies and crucifixion of the Redeemer. On whichever of these two subjects he happened to be dwelling, he spoke as one who had a fire in his heart.

The big boys felt the hot blood in their cheeks as the Dominie told of Joshua and of Gideon, of Barak and of Saul, of David and of Benaiah. Even the weak ones, who were never picked for "Rex" or "Futba'," but

merely thrown in as of no account on one side or the other after the teams had been chosen, answered with a thrill at the heart to the brave stories of the old heroes and kings.

When the Bible lessons had to do with the sufferings of the Savior, there was a lump in nearly every throat. Crookit Sol himself was touched to the heart. His voice shivered; and there was a moist light in his cold, gray eyes that changed the whole character of his face and made him look like another man.

But with the close of the Bible lesson the Dominie's gentler mood vanished. Before his scholars had come out of the stillness which an hour with the Cross had left about their hearts, they would be shocked and startled by the harsh, rasping tones of rebuke and command, that spoke their teacher's return to his old forbidding self again. The incongruity of the Dominie's two moods never seemed to strike his own mind; but it troubled the hearts of his scholars. Some of them did not hesitate to whisper him a hypocrite. The majority loved the Bible lesson too well to go that length. Though they could not have expressed it, they had a dim guess of the truth. There was a Love fighting for the mastery over Crookit Sol's sour and sunless life.

The change came about after the Dominie had been in Glen Brearachan for a little over ten years. He had brought the morning Bible lesson to a close. He had dealt with the subject of which he loved best to speak—the sufferings of the Savior at the hands of Cæsar's soldiers. Some of the more sensitive

girls had broken down in a passion of tears as he pictured the terrible scourging. Even among the boys there was none wholly unmoved. Crookit Sol himself showed his feelings more openly than he had ever been known to do before. As he turned towards his desk, at the close of the lesson, he was observed to draw the sleeve of his coat across his eyes. But, after the classes had returned to their several benches, the sound of a voice in forbidden whispers reached his ears, and seemed to transform him in an instant into his old, harsh self. He wheeled round with a face that showed no sign of the feeling which had touched it into a rare softness only a moment or two before.

"Stand up the boy who spoke!" he thundered across the room.

There was a second of stunned silence, as if the Dominie's changed mood had come upon the school almost with the shock of a profanity. But Crookit Sol's harsh discipline had wrought its natural effect. The culprit could not hope to escape detection. Some of the boys who had been flogged into obsequious cowardice would have called the whisperer's name aloud, had they not been afraid of the consequences that would be sure to follow when they got out into the freer and more healthful atmosphere of the playground. Crookit Sol did not need the information that his sycophants were willing to give. By the pointing of eyes about the back benches—pitifully eloquent of the havoc which the tawse had wrought

upon the spirit of the school—it was quite an easy thing to single the offender out.

“Roderick McLean, come up to the desk!” and the Dominie’s voice had the terrible evenness and calm of a white anger in its tones.

The laggard culprit rose from his seat and began to cross the floor. His limbs shook in the sudden affright that had fallen upon him, and caused him to stagger in his walk like a man intoxicated. A fear stared out of his big, blue eyes, of that wild, heart-sickening sort that dries up the fountain of tears.

Rorie was a small, ill-shapen boy of fourteen. Scarcely a day passed that did not find him under the Dominie’s merciless tawse for some real or imagined offense. Yet one could think only with difficulty of a child whose circumstances and appearance made a stronger appeal to pity. Deformity and bad treatment had stamped an old look upon his drawn and bloodless face. He was roughly used at home, and in his school life he found little to give him comfort. His companions did not subject him to positive ill-usage. They simply left him alone, and never dreamed of making a place for him in any of the games. Rorie got into the way of haunting the girls’ side of the play-ground. But girls can sometimes be crueller even than boys, and they often sent the little hunch-back away into some lone corner of his own with tears in his eyes and a stabbed heart.

Big Kate of the Mill was Rorie’s only real friend. She was a rough, boisterous lass, who could use her

hands with as good effect as any boy of her age in the school. Although she was scarcely a general favorite, and was looked down upon for her coarseness and her winsey dresses by the girls from the farm-houses, she had a good deal of influence. Kate was too big and masterful to be set aside, and her strong, shrill voice domineered over most of the games on the girls' side of the green. Somehow, Rorie McLean caught the pity of Big Kate's rough nature, and except for the friending that she gave to him, his school-life would have been intolerable.

"What did you say when you went back to your seat?" the Dominie demanded of the child, who cowered before him in expectation of the lashes that were soon to madden him with pain.

Rorie's lips shook, as if he were trying to frame an answer. But no words came from his tongue, and Crookit Sol, taking the silence as a sign of stubbornness, grew black in the face.

"I'll find your tongue for you!" he roared in a foam of rage.

The long, five-fingered tawse descended in all the strength of the Dominie's right arm upon the child's naked legs. Again and again it fell, biting and twisting round the little hunchback's body like a hideous black snake, until, unable longer to bear the cruel pain, he clasped his poor arms round his tormentor's knees and shrieked for mercy.

"Stop, sir! I canna bear't! Ye'll hae me killed! I'll tell ye what I was sayin'," he cried, in the madness of suffering.

"What were you saying?" Crookit Sol demanded, as he roughly shook off the child's grip, and tumbled him over on the floor at his feet.

"I was spierin' at Kate," and the thin, shrill voice piped through the hushed affright of the school like the cry of the curlew across the silence of a muir-loch, "if the scourgin' ye were tellin' us about wad be waur t' bear nor the lickin's I'll be gettin' frae yersel'?"

Rorie's confession rang out into every corner of the school. The boys felt their cheeks grow suddenly cold. The girls dropped their faces into their hands and wept. For a moment, that seemed like an hour, not a word was spoken.

The little hunchback lay huddled on the floor in a ragged, piteous heap, chafing with sore hands his poor legs and bleeding feet, shivering and sobbing, partly in actual pain, and partly in dreadful anticipation of the new assault which he felt that his confession was sure to provoke.

But Crookit Sol stood motionless and white of face like one who had been stunned with a sudden dread or shame. The hunchback's cry had pierced him to the conscience. He gazed blankly down upon the child at his feet, while the clock that hung on the east wall, between the blackboard and the stool, sounded seven loud ticks. Coming to himself again with a start, as if he had been newly awakened out of sleep, and forgetting about appearances, proud man as he was, in the strong rush of Love which had got the victory at last over his rough nature after a ten-years' fight, he fell upon his knees on the floor, and, gathering the

poor hunchback tenderly in his arms, cried out, with a hoarse sob in his voice that choked every throat in the school, "O God, forgive me!"

The Dominie remained upon his knees only for a few moments. The instinct of discipline soon brought him to his feet again. He still held Rorie in his arms when he rose from the floor, but, instead of carrying him to his seat, he took him into the little room that opened off the porch and did duty both as an office and a peat-house.

For fully an hour the school was left to itself. But there was no disorder, for the pathos of the scene upon which the scholars had looked would have held them quiet a longer time than that.

When the Dominie and Rorie came out of the office hand in hand, it was plain that a change had been wrought upon both of them. What passed between them in that hour that they spent together God and themselves alone know. But there was the glow of a new hope in the little hunchback's eyes that was never to die away through the few years of life that remained to him. Crookit Sol wore a new look too. A light as of victory touched his rugged features into something like beauty, and, for those who had eyes to see, the light was shadowed by the lines that long years of conflict had furrowed out.

The reign of the tawse was over. Of course the Dominie's complete transformation was not the work of an hour, or even of a year. But the New Life got the mastery over his strong nature in the moment when Rorie's confession pierced him to the soul.

From that time onwards he grew more deeply every year into the power and the beauty of gentleness. He was strict in his discipline to the last, but the second generation of children in the Glen, who sat on the old, notched, and ink-stained benches, knew nothing of the harshness that their predecessors had suffered from. Before the days of their schooling Crookit Sol had grown to be a *gentle man* under the power of the New Life. He was respected everywhere; in the school the children *loved* him.

THE DE'IL'S BAIRN

THE DE'IL'S BAIRN.

I.

WHEN the tokens for the Sacrament were being distributed, at the close of the morning service on the Fast Day, Roderick Farquharson was the dread of every uneasy conscience. The Minister was often blind to the failings of his people. But nothing could happen in the Glen without Roderick coming to hear of it; and he was inflexibly rigorous in requiring that a member of the Kirk, about whose "walk and conversation" there had been any suspicion of frailty, should be "put back" for twelve months.

The exercise of Kirk discipline might have been a thing of less frequent occurrence, if it had not happened that Martinmas feeing-market was usually held in the week before the November communion. Members of the Kirk, whose conduct during the rest of the year was without reproach, occasionally yielded to the convivial temptations of the Inn on the evening of the market day. The offense might have been dealt with leniently if it had been committed at another time, but the fact that it had been perpetrated within the few days of the Sacrament week was understood to add greatly to its heinousness. That, at any rate, was Elder Farquharson's firm belief; and he regarded it as the duty of a faithful under-shepherd to look after the flock as it wandered among the special dangers

of the market night. From the shadow of the yew-tree, at the west corner of the Kirk-yard, he watched the Inn doors until the last reveler had turned his steps unsteadily homewards. For over twenty years, as everybody knew, he had kept his Martinmas vigil in rain and frost and snow. Even when his knees began to stiffen with rheumatism his wife could not keep him in the house on the market night.

"Dinna be tempin' me, woman!" he would cry, as he hobbled towards the door. "Thir's wolves in sheeps' clothing among the flock, and the Lord is biddin' me find them oot and fling them from the fold."

Roderick Farquharson had too clear an eye for faults and inconsistencies of conduct to be popular. But nobody ever doubted his sincerity, and there was one thing which even those who liked him least were accustomed to mention in his favor. He was always perfectly impartial, and never made class distinctions among the people who seemed, in his judgment, to merit ecclesiastical rebuke. The Laird could have testified to this, as Roderick had frequently taken him to task for making his coachman drive him to the Kirk on Sabbath. And any of the younger members of the Presbytery who had preached in the Glen could have borne corroborative witness. For youth and fieresy were linked together in Roderick's imagination, and a minister under forty years of age could always reckon on being dealt with by Elder Farquharson when he got back from the pulpit to the vestry. It was whispered that he had once taken Mr. Carment

himself to task on a point of doctrine, and that for some months afterwards he wore a subdued and chastened expression as the result of the "hearing" to which the Minister subjected him.

But there was a kindlier heart in Roderick Farquharson than most people suspected. Behind a forbidding front he hid some genial qualities that would have come to the surface if they had only been worked upon in the right way. That was what James McBeth always said. He and Farquharson had been close friends for thirty years, although no two men were ever more different in disposition. The one was slow and ponderous in the movements of his mind, suffering his life with a fixed seriousness that deepened sometimes into positive gloom; the other was quick and clever, with a keen, healthy love in his heart for God's sunshine and everything else that was bright. His irrepressible buoyancy and spirit had kept McBeth from being elected to the Session. He was considered wanting in that decorous sobriety of demeanor which was regarded as essential to the qualifications of an Elder. But Roderick Farquharson championed his friend against all detractors, and never tired of protesting that "there isna a soonder man comin' t' the Kirk o' Glen Brearachan than James McBeth."

There were frequent theological disputes between the two curiously mated friends; but it was about the strawberries, upon which both of them partly depended for their living, that they entered oftenest and most keenly into contention. Neither cultivator enjoyed any advantage of situation or superior stock, but

somehow or other McBeth's strawberries were always better forward and more inviting-looking than his friend's. This was a source of real trouble to Roderick. He did not grudge another man his good fortune, but he could not account for the difference between McBeth's strawberries and his own in a way that brought satisfaction to his mind. His natural impulse was to look for the explanation along the lines of Divine judgment, but after much searching of heart he had come to the conclusion that it could not possibly lie in that direction. With all his shortcomings, he was unable conscientiously to admit that James McBeth was more likely to be favored of heaven than himself.

On a certain summer morning the trouble in Roderick's mind became acute. He was passing his friend's house, and, looking over the garden fence, he could see that the strawberries were unmistakably better than his own. His heart sickened with perplexity at the sight. But he was determined to get the explanation, and with serious, furrowed face he made his way among the beds to the spot where McBeth was working.

"I canna understan'," he remarked in a passionless tone, as if delivering himself of a quite general reflection, "hoo your straaberries are aye better than mine."

McBeth was deaf and had not heard his visitor enter the garden. But he was not easily taken by surprise, and looking up into Farquharson's troubled

face with a quick, mischievous twinkle in his eye, he answered:

"Can ye no'? I'm astonished at that. Thir's no diffeeculty aboot it ava—'And all he doth shall prosper well.' Ye ken the rest."

Roderick made no reply to his friend's sally, but as he plodded slowly homewards the lines about his lips began to break. Before the day was half over the flavor of James McBeth's pious witticism had got complete possession of his palate. Every now and then, as he rolled his tongue round it, he would emit the three short, guttural sounds, which were the nearest thing to a laugh that was ever heard from his lips. His wife became quite concerned about him. As she confided to Marget McIntyre at the bakehouse in the evening, she "dooted if the body hedna taken leave o' his judgment."

It was over the death of Nell Munro that the Glen got a look into Roderick Farquharson's inmost heart. At the close of the November Fast Day services the Session met, according to custom, to make arrangements for the celebration of the Sacrament on the following Sunday. When the conversational stage had been reached, the Souter asked if the Minister had heard of "Auld Nell's" death on the previous evening.

"I have just been wondering what we should do about it," Mr. Carment replied.

"Ye wadna hae veesited her when she was lyin', sir?"

"I went to the house twice, but she turned her face to the wall when she saw me enter the room; and,

whenever I tried to speak, she put her fingers in her ears."

"Keep me!" the Souter exclaimed in a tone of horror. "But what better could ye expect?"

"Auld Nell" had borne an evil reputation in the Glen through three generations. She was over a hundred years old when she died, and nobody knew where she had come from in her youth. As long as anybody could remember she had lived in a lonely, tumble-down hut on the Kirkmichael brae; but, although she always professed to be a native of the Glen, the parish books contained no information about her birth or parentage. "Auld Nell" was believed to be possessed of the powers of witchcraft. If anything went wrong with a horse or a cow it was generally whispered about that "the witch-wife had put *butchach* (cast a spell) on it." Her fell power was understood to extend even to children, and there was never a father who carried a bairn to the Kirk-yard without casting, as he passed, a glance of horror and fear at the four-paned window of the hut on the brae.

Nell Munro's appearance helped out the popular conception of her character. Her gray hair fell about her ears and neck in a rough tangle. She had only one eye. Her teeth were all gone, with the exception of two long black fangs in her upper jaw; and when her lips parted, in what was meant to be a smile, she wore as uncanny a look as one could well conceive. But Nell profited by the dark reputation in which she was held. The mothers pressed many a hard-won six-

pence into her thin cold hand, in fear that she might cast her fell *butchach* on the bairns if she were not propitiated with some gift every time she called at their door.

"Wull she be beeried in the Kirk-yard?" the Souter asked again. "It's an awfu' like thing t' be puttin' a witch doon so near t' the hoose o' the Lord."

"I don't see how it can be avoided," Mr. Carment replied.

"Are ye believin' about Auld Nell bein' a witch, Minister?" asked Tommy Rae. "It's no held by the Kirk that there's witches in the warld noo."

Tommy Rae, the saddler, was a Southerner who had only been in the Glen for about ten years. He had been somewhat hastily elected an Elder shortly after his arrival, and the Session had never ceased to regret the mistake that was made. His present question was typical of the skeptical remarks which he was in the habit of making about some of the most deeply cherished convictions of the people among whom he had come to live.

"Believin' it!" the Souter interjected with indignant scorn. "If ye hed been as lang in Glen Brearachan as I hev been, Thomas Rae, ye wad hae guid cause t' believe it yersel'. There's scarce a femly in the country-side that hesna had Nell's *butchach* on it at one time or anither, an' if them that's seen them wi' their ain e'en liked t' be speakin' ye wad hear tell o' mony a fearsome sicht aboot the hoose on the Kirk-michael brae. As far back as five an' forty years syne, I was stan'in masel', aboot nine o'clock at nicht, on the

Knowe behind the Inn gairden, an' I seen a blue licht wi' a lang yallow tail t' it risin' oot o' Auld Nell's lum an' workin' slowly ower the moon in the wy o' the Bodagh's Hole. It was nobut a few oors efter that Maister Carment an' masel' found Rob McIntosh an' his dochter smooored in the snaw as near t' the Hole as a hunner yairds. Wull ye be tellin' me in the face o' that 'at Nell wesna a witch-wife?"

"Maybe ye wadna hev been so sure about the licht, Souter, if ye'd been farrer frae the inn."

The Saddler's last remark was treated with contempt. He was suspected of being a Voluntary at heart, and his advocacy of teetotalism had long since deprived him of all influence in the Glen.

"There can be no doubt," Mr. Carment remarked in a grave tone that was felt to be a rebuke to Tommy Rae's flippant skepticism, "that the wretched woman who has gone to her account had long since sold her soul to Satan. But I am not sure whether we should go to the burial, or should leave the Inspector of Poor to carry it out in the best way he can. It is not of the dead I'm thinking, but of the living. What is to become of the child?"

"The De'il 'll look efter his ain," was the Souter's grim reply.

"Think shame t' yersel', John Sturrock, guid man as a'budy kens ye t' be, for misca'in a puir helpless bairn like that, an' you wi' a femly o' yer ain! Ye'll never get me t' believe that yon bonnie bit lassie was faithered by the De'il."

It was Roderick Farquharson who spoke, and the eyes of everyone in the room turned towards him in open astonishment. He was the last man from whom leniency of judgment would have been looked for, and yet it was evident that he spoke under a feeling of strong indignation.

The child about whom the Session was debating had a strange history. From one of her frequent rambles over the country, Nell Munro returned some four years before her death with a bonnie blue-eyed bairn in her arms. She described her as a great grand-child, but, as nobody had ever heard of Nell having son or daughter of her own, the story was not generally credited. Something in the shy manner and the wistful expression of the little one, along with the mystery that surrounded her parentage, began to set uncanny rumors afloat. Before she had been a month in the hut on the brae it had come to be fixed in the mind of the Glen that Nell Munro had received the child from the Prince of Darkness himself in reward for the service which she rendered to his dreadful cause. For fear of possible consequences it was never spoken above a whisper; but in the guarded gossip of the inglenook "Auld Nell's" adopted child was always described as "The De'il's Bairn."

Roderick's outburst made a deep impression on the Minister. It strengthened the inclination towards charity and gentleness which was always uppermost with him, although duty and doctrine often overpowered it.

"I'm thinking Roderick has the right of it," he said.

"For the sake of the child it is, perhaps, only right to give the wretched woman a decent burial."

"Weel, Maister Carment," the Souter began, and his voice trembled as he spoke, "for five an' forty years you an' me's stood thegither at every beerial in Glen Brearachan. I've never failed ye once, as yersel' kens, but, if ye're gaun' t' beery Auld Nell Munro ye'll have t' gang yer lane."

"Maister Carment'll no' gang his lane," Roderick Farquharson exclaimed, with a touch of the old indignation still in his voice. "I'll be there, if there's no' anither man in the Glen t' keep me company. The Lord's stronger than the De'il, an' it's the Lord's work t' gie beerial even t' a witch, an' t' tak' tent o' a puir freendless bairn that's never wroucht hairm t' nobody."

II.

THE Beadle called at the Manse at two o'clock on Saturday afternoon. He had made up his mind, after a long struggle, to stand by Mr. Carment at Nell Munro's burial. There was something of the old clan spirit about Tammas. He looked upon the Minister as his chief, and, in loyalty to him, he considered it his duty even to risk an encounter with the De'il.

It was a raw November day. The country wore the unkindly look which the first snow of the season leaves, after it has melted, to show that the reign of winter is begun. A strong, bitter wind blew up from the east, bringing the rain over the Craigs in cold, stinging showers. The Brearachan was in spate, and the old Brig had enough to do to keep its place against the heavy rush of melted snow. There was nobody out of doors except Daft Jeemie, who amused himself by throwing pieces of paling, which he had torn from the Souter's garden-fence, into the back-water of the long pool above the Brig. As the stream sucked them out one by one he laughed in his shrill, foolish way, and looked around for somebody to share in his enjoyment. The Souter's fence would soon have been stripped if the Beadle had not called out from the Brig as he was crossing with Mr. Carment—

"Ye're workin' for yer licks, ma laddie." A sight of the Minister was enough to awaken even Daft Jeemie's dullard conscience, and before Tammas could add anything to his first remark he had fled.

The storm showed no signs of slackening as the Minister and his man climbed the Kirkmichael brae. For the first half of their journey they were partly sheltered by the thick knot of pine-trees on Knock-farrie; but after they had rounded the knoll they found themselves struggling in the teeth of a strong east wind, on one of the highest and bleakest muirs in Perthshire. It was as much as they could do at times to keep their feet, and every now and then they had to pause for breath.

In some moods Tammas could have enjoyed the storm, for there was a strain of subtle poetic fancy in his nature. The cronies, who used to gather about the Souter's ingle on a Saturday evening, had often listened with awe as he told them of things the winds and the clouds and the Craigs had been saying to him when he wandered alone on the moor. But there was no joy in his heart now; not because the storm was voiceless, but because it seemed to be speaking out only too clearly the very thought that was trembling in his own mind.

"Mercy on us, sir!" he exclaimed as they got to the top of the brae, "it's a terrible like day. Div ye think it'll be for a judgment on the witch-wife?"

"We have seen many a wilder day in the Glen than this, Thomas," was the Minister's unsatisfactory reply.

Tammas said no more, but the last spark of courage died out of his heart when he caught sight of the ill-famed hut. He began to drop behind, and Mr. Carmont might have gone into the hut without noticing that his companion had deserted him, if his attention had not been suddenly arrested by a sharp cry of terror, just as he was fumbling with the clumsy latch of Auld Nell's garden gate.

"What's wrong?" he called back in the irritated tone of a man who rebukes a dread with which his own heart has more sympathy than he would care to acknowledge.

"Did ye see thon, sir?" and the Beadle pointed with unsteady fingers to the roof of the hut.

"See what?"

"The black cat wantin' her tail! She loupit ower the thack an' into the lum. It's Auld Nell hersel' as sure's daith. I canna gang farrer, sir. It's a fearsome thing t' be tempin' the De'il this wy in his ain hoose. I'm no' fit for't. Ye wadna be hearin' that I wesna ower careful wi' the drink on the market night. Roderick Farquharson didna ken aboot it, because I slippit oot o' the Inn through the parlor windy so's he wadna see me and get me sayshioned. An' th' morn the Saicrament too! Ochone, the guid peety me!"

The Minister went inside without attempting to force his companion into accompanying him. He found three people waiting for him in the hut: James Robertson, the Postmaster, whose duty as Inspector of Poor required him to be present; Roderick Farquharson, and the little six years' child who went by the name of "The

De'il's Bairn." Before Mr. Carment's arrival the two men had screwed Auld Nell's body into the plain deal coffin which the parish allowed to its pauper dead. Their work done, they stood by the door speechless and grim, and left the child to weep uncomforted beside the bed on which her "Grannie's" body had lain.

The burial service was of the simplest kind. In a brief prayer Mr. Carment commended the desolate child to the care of Him who is Father to the fatherless, without making more than a single guarded reference to the woman whose body was to be carried to the Kirk-yard.

It would be hard work for four men to carry a coffin down the Kirkmichael brae on a stormy winter day; for three it was an impossible task, and the Minister had to go out and press his conscience-stricken Beadle into the service after all. But Tammas had recovered a little from his fright by this time, and, in the absence of further uncanny manifestations, was even beginning to regret the penitential frankness which had led him to incriminate himself in respect of his conduct on the market night. After he had been three separate times assured that the coffin had been closed and the prayer "made" without any sign of a supernatural presence having been observed, he cautiously followed his master into the room.

A poor-looking procession it was that tramped slowly down the village street, about five o'clock in the afternoon, on its way to the Kirk-yard. Four men, tired out with a journey of two miles, which it had taken them as many hours to accomplish, and a little white-

faced child following desolately behind as the only mourner at Auld Nell's cheerless funeral. A touch of womanly tenderness somewhere would have softened the grimness of the scene. But superstitious dread was deeply rooted in the Glen, and as the women peered through their windows they whispered no charity about the dead and no compassion for the living. They were kindly folk, ready to weep with any mourner when they felt the touch of genuine human grief; but "The De'il's Bairn" did not belong to their world at all, and her evident grief was to them only a part of the dark, unholy mystery that lay around her life.

It was commonly acknowledged that the Beadle's way of filling in a grave added greatly to the solemnity of a burial. He never allowed himself to be hurried, and on the coldest winter day he would keep people standing in the Kirk-yard for over half an hour before he gave the final clap to the earthen mound which signified that his work was done and they were at liberty to disperse. But Tammas spent no more time over Auld Nell than was absolutely necessary, for he was as anxious as any of his companions to get done with a business for which none of them had much liking.

Before leaving the Kirk-yard the Minister held a whispered consultation with James Robertson about the child. They decided that she would have to go to the poor-house, as Auld Nell had left no relative to whose care she could be committed. The Postmaster bade her follow him to the Inn, where he would arrange to have her sent down in a dog-cart to Logierait. The child seemed to care little where she was taken. Without

saying a word she obediently followed her new guardian half way across the green in the direction of the Inn. But a consciousness of desolation came upon her all of a sudden, and with a shrill cry of grief she ran back through the Kirk-yard gates and threw herself down in a passion of weeping on Auld Nell's grave.

"Grannie, grannie," she sobbed out, "tak' me wi' ye! Dinna leave me ma lane!"

Some of the boys had allowed curiosity to get the better of their fear. They did not venture into the Kirk-yard, but with heads and shoulders above the coping of the low dyke on the west side they watched the progress of the burial. The three feet of earth that they had seen Tammas pile above the witch-wife's coffin seemed to give them a feeling of security which they had never enjoyed while she was alive. Their new sense of freedom found expression for itself in the things they cried across to the sobbing child. As she wept on the grave of the only creature who had ever shown her kindness, one of the boys called out in a voice loud enough for her to hear if she had been giving heed—

"De'il's Bairn, yer grannie's in the bad place noo."

Another was beginning to repeat the words in a still louder and more aggressive tone, but, before he had got them out, he was dragged roughly off the dyke by the collar of his coat.

"Hoo daur ye mock at a freendless bairn, ye onfeelin' brat?" a gruff voice roared in a passion of indignant anger.

The culprits saw that it was Elder Farquharson they

had to deal with, and they slunk sheepishly away. Roderick did not attempt to follow them. His heart was full of a suddenly born purpose. With an agility that no one who knew him would have expected, he leaped over the dyke and strode across the graves towards the forlorn and weeping child.

“Dinna greet, ma bonnie doo’,” and he lifted her tenderly in his strong arms and pressed her trembling face against his own rough cheek; ye’ll come hame wi’ me. The wife has no bairns o’ her ain, an’ she’ll be a kind mither t’ ye.”

From the day of Auld Nell’s burial the Glen saw Roderick Farquharson in a new light. “The De’il’s Bairn” had touched some unsuspected spring of tenderness in his heart, and as she grew up to maidenhood year by year the lines about his lips got gradually softer. After “The De’il’s Bairn” had come into his life, he never went into the shadow of the yew-tree again, to watch the flock as it wrestled with the temptations of the Inn on the evening of the Martinmas market day.



THE ENGLISH GAUGER

THE ENGLISH GAUGER

I.

THE COMING OF THE GAUGER

THERE was an unusual stir at the Brig. It was Saturday afternoon, about the time when the mail-coach from Dunkeld was expected to arrive. The coach was understood to be due at four o'clock, but it was often two hours later than that before it drew up, opposite McIntyre's Inn, at the west side of the Brig. Peter Morrison was kind to his beasts. He did not trouble himself much about the comfort or convenience of his passengers; these were always secondary considerations with him. If the horses were in good heart, the journey might be accomplished within half an hour of the time that was supposed to be allowed for it. But Peter would never press his team. The question of time and pace was always left to the horses themselves; equine decision on that point was sovereign and final.

There were whispers about the Glen of the artifices by which Peter soothed the feelings of impatient passengers. He turned their ire with a toothsome tale or a pawky bit of flattery, but the pace upon which his leader had decided was never by any chance disturbed.

No Glen man dreamed of suggesting that Peter should put a sharper note into the crack of his whip, or shorten the breathing-time at the top of Dalguise hill. It was the sportsmen from the South, on their way to the Castle or one of the shooting-lodges, who ventured upon these items of advice. Only in their first season, however; for after one journey they discovered that Peter's driving-rules—as Colonel Hughes, the sporting tenant of Balranald, once put it—were like the laws of the Medes and Persians. The knowledge of Scripture implied in the Colonel's remark was a slender basis on which to rest an opinion about his spiritual condition. But Peter appreciated the compliment implied in the gallant sportsman's similitude, and he was reported to have interrupted one of Roderick Farquharson's frequent denunciations with the hazard—

“The Colonel is no' just kirk-greedy, I'll admit, but I wadna' like t' say for a' that, 'at he michtna hev the root o' the maitter in him.”

The Brig was held by about a dozen boys, who were bunched together, in different attitudes of expectant ease, against the low stone wall at the west end, on the side nearest to the Inn. The hostler and his two stable-lads were standing some thirty or forty yards away at the corner of the coach-house. Ostensibly they had come round to help Peter in unyoking; but, as everybody knew that Peter allowed no other hands than his own to touch his horses, there was obviously some better explanation for the interest with which they awaited the arrival of the coach. The truth is, they

had been drawn out by a curiosity similar to that which had brought McIntyre himself, the Postmaster, old Ewan Cameron, the Supervisor, and half-a-dozen others to the "loupin'-stane" in front of the Inn door. From the indifferent remarks that were exchanged among the elder representatives of the Glen, no one could have gathered that anything unusual was expected to happen. But the boys were less reserved.

"D'ye think he'll bide long?" Geordie McAllum inquired, in the impersonal way that left anybody free to answer who had an opinion on the point.

"If he's here as long's Alastair *More*, he'll no be leavin' in a hurry," was the reply which Baldy Ferguson returned. Baldy usually assumed the office of oracle when Rob Carment was out of hearing.

The answer was felt to be discouraging, and there was a painful silence that must have lasted for quite half a minute, until Geordie eased the situation. "Maybe," he suggested with recovered hopefulness of tone, "he'll think shame and leave."

It was the coming of the English Gauger that had roused the Glen into such an unusual display of curious, half-hostile interest. Old Fraser—or Alastair *More*, as he was commonly called, in recognition of the fact that he was the tallest man in the Glen—had been superannuated after forty years' service, and a stranger from the South was appointed to take his place. But speculation on the subject of the intruder's intentions was suddenly arrested by the appearance of the mail-coach, as it swung steadily round the school-house corner less than a quarter of a mile away.

"Here she comes!" Georgie McAllum called, and instantly, by some curious instinct, the boys drew together in a closer group. They had nothing to fear; but the situation was exciting, and they appeared to feel that there was security in companionship.

There was nothing unusually suggestive in Peter Morrison's manner of drawing the coach up to the "loupin'-stane." He said, "Steady, noo!" and "Whoa!" exactly as he had been accustomed to say them for nearly thirty years. In his usual deliberate way he climbed down from his seat on the box, hitched the reins around the handle of the brake, and began to search for the letter-bag. Peter enjoyed the interest which was commonly taken in the process of extrication, by which he displayed, one by one, the miscellaneous collection of articles huddled together under the driving-seat of the coach. It would be difficult to account for the eager attention which his movements commanded night after night; they never seemed to result in any disclosures of a revolutionary nature. Indeed, there always was a curious similarity about the contents of the box. One who was not a close observer might have imagined that the Dunkeld coach carried exactly the same assortment of packages on every journey—a green carpet-bag, fastened on one side at the mouth with a small brass padlock, and adorned with the name and destination of its owner on a label that was almost large and stout enough to have done duty as a sign-board; a box of "sweeties" for the replenishing of the two glass jars in the Post-master's shop window; three or four parcels of varying

size roughly made up in the thickest species of brown paper ; and, every second Saturday, the oblong hamper in which Davie Thompson, who was working at the Birnam slate quarries, sent his clothes home to be washed.

But Peter's investigations were not followed with the usual interest on this particular Saturday evening. Yet, if the onlookers had only been wakeful, they would have been extravagantly rewarded for their two hours' waiting. The first article that Peter Morrison drew out from under the driving-seat, and deposited on the ground with befitting impressiveness, was a brown leather portmanteau. In the early weeks of August leather portmanteaus were not uncommon ; the sportsmen who came north for the grouse-shooting were generally accompanied by one or two of those southern-looking traveling requisites. For the rest of the year portmanteaus were wholly unknown. When the Glen folk went on a journey they used carpet-bags of various sizes and colors. The only leathern receptacle known to the parish belonged to Mr. Carment. But there was nothing showy about the Minister's traveling bag ; it had been constructed by Tommy Rae, the saddler, out of the soberest black material that the Logierait tannery could supply. Moreover—as Margaret McIntyre whispered, in an apologetic way, to the three or four who were standing about the bake-house door when Mr. Carment mounted the coach, on the first Tuesday of the month, to go to the Presbytery meeting at Dunkeld—"he got it in a present."

There was a hint of "dourness" in Peter Morrison's

manner as he deposited the contents of the box on the narrow sidewalk. He could see that the boys were engrossed in contemplation of the single passenger who had descended from the left-hand box seat whenever the coach had been brought to a standstill. Even the older onlookers, who might have been reasonably supposed to be possessed of riper judgment, were obviously more interested in the new arrival than they were in the luggage which Peter handled with impressive dignity.

The English Gauger did not seem to be aware of the interest which his coming had aroused. He walked sharply back and forward three times, in a space of about fifteen yards, to relieve the stiffness of his limbs, and then came round the back of the coach to make a settlement with Peter, and to claim his luggage. As he stopped to lift the brown portmanteau he became conscious for the first time that there were other people about. Lifting himself up again, with the quick jerk that the Glen got to be familiar with in later days, he looked steadily round upon the three groups of bystanders, and in a clear, pleasant voice, said:

"Good evening to you all! We're a little late, are we not?"

For quite half a minute there was no reply. Only a rustle among the boys, and the movement of one of the stable-lads in shifting his weight to the other leg, gave any indication that the Gauger's remark had been heard. It was the Postmaster who broke the silence. James Robertson was a civil servant himself, and felt it was his duty to take the lead in dealing

with the new Government official. But the situation was a difficult one. The Gauger's remark seemed to imply a criticism upon Peter Morrison's management of his horses, and no one in the Glen would willingly associate himself with any such novelty as that. On the other hand, it was against all traditions to treat a stranger with discourtesy. The solution of the problem, at which the Postmaster arrived in the short time at his disposal, was accepted as a wise and skillful satisfaction of the needs of the position.

"Good evening to you, sir," he replied. "Ye're no byor'nar' late, takin' a' thing into consideration."

During the time consumed in the exchange of courtesies there was a first rough estimate of the English Gauger's character. The Glen prided itself on the accuracy of its earliest impressions; they never needed to be corrected; later discoveries invariably confirmed them. The classic instance, which was frequently referred to the Souter for verification, was the case of Mr. Carment. When the parish fell vacant in the early twenties, the father of the present Laird, who was nearing his end at the time and unable to give attention to ecclesiastical matters, waived his right of patronage. Four probable candidates were invited to take a Sabbath each in the Kirk. The first three delivered their discourses with edifying unction; the fourth had shown such nervousness, and been so lacking in readiness of speech that his sermon came to an untimely end. Yet the hearers at the Kirk declared with one voice that no one but the preacher who had broken down in the middle of his discourse would con-

tent their hearts. That was the way of Mr. Carment's coming to Glen Brearachan, more than forty years back, in the spring of his preaching-days. And, although times were changed, the Minister had kept his grip on the respect and the love of his people; in the third generation it showed no sign of slackening. But the first impression about the English Gauger was at fault, as everyone who had helped to fix it frankly admitted before the back of the winter was broken. Even James Robertson—the shrewdest of his critics—had been led astray by the newcomer's appearance. He was wrapped from top to toe in a heavy traveling-cloak; the collar, turned up around his neck, was buttoned closely in at the throat, and a hood of the same cloth as the coat, in the fashion of a monk's cowl, shrouded his head and ears and a full half of his brow. Although a little above the average height, he seemed to be sparely built; and a face, paler and thinner than the Glen was accustomed to associate with perfect robustness of health, deepened the conviction that was forming in the minds of the scrutineers. It may be that the dark hair, visible in one wandered lock over the left temple, and the short, pointed beard of a similar hue, lent an extra tone of whiteness to the stranger's face. Indeed, there were several misleading circumstances connected with the English Gauger's first appearance in the Glen, which were afterwards pleaded in extenuation of the erroneous judgment that had been recorded against him. But at the time—as everyone admitted later—the same mistaken estimate of the stranger's character was arrived at in each of

the three groups by which the insight and the caution and the impulsiveness of the Glen were separately represented. It was from the boys, of course, that the first indications came. Whispers became gradually more audible; hints were dropped, as if in casual conversation, that should have pierced the Gauger's heart with shame. The inferiority of the southern race in all the arts of peace and war was demonstrated by axiomatic clearness; the superstitions and "hunkerings" which debased the religion of England were mercilessly exposed; and the general infelicity of the Gauger's appointment to Glen Brearachan was adversely commented upon with a steadily rising firmness of tone.

Geordie McAllum brought things to a head. He had been preparing for his grand attack by lowering himself over the parapet of the Brig to the depth of his chest. A drop of four feet would give him an easy escape up the burn if the Gauger's wrath were kindled to the danger of his personal safety. An instinctive inkling of Geordie's intentions moved his companions to withdraw a step or two and put themselves in readiness for flight.

"Ye got yer licks at Bannockburn!" shouted the patriotic youth; and the last syllables were deadened against the dyke stones as he let himself down to the ground on the other side of the Brig. The band of boy patriots dispersed in headlong flight. Such a biting, intolerable reproach could only lead to one result: the Gauger must purge the shame of his dishonored nation by declaring immediate and ruthless war.

But when the fugitives slackened for breath at the Souter's garden-gate, and took a quick, wary look behind them, they were astounded and disgusted to discover that Geordie's opprobrious taunt had fallen upon deaf ears. The Gauger was conversing in an unmistakably friendly way with McIntyre and the Postmaster. Slowly, and almost unable to credit the evidence of their senses, the runaways drew back towards their former position on the Brig. This was a spirit that they had never come into contact with before; they could not understand it; they found it difficult even to think about it calmly. If a Southerner had flung the reproach of Flodden or Culloden Muir at them, they would have been set aflame with a thirst for vengeance that could only be quenched in blood.

That was the particular juncture at which the Gauger's character was finally summed up. There was an impression formed upon the minds of old and young that he was lacking in "spunk." The boys had no more to say. They contented themselves with bestowing upon the stranger a protracted gaze of contemptuous pity as he gathered his belongings together, and, with James Robertson's patronizing help, carried them up the road about two hundred yards to his lodging at Widow Ferguson's cottage.

Herbert Stanton—for that was the young Excise-man's name—stooped below the honeysuckle arch at Widow Ferguson's front gate, and, a moment later, was out of sight. If he thought at all about the kind of reception that was given to him on his first appearance in Glen Brearachan, he had the judgment to keep

his reflections to himself. His kindly hostess saw nothing in his manner that suggested chagrin or resentment. He accepted her welcome as heartily as it was given; and, after divesting himself of his traveling-cloak and close-fitting tweed cap, stood up before her on the hearth-rug, between the two brass candlesticks on the high mantel-shelf, a fine figure of a shapely, purposeful man.

"Mak' yer tea, sir," the motherly hostess urged. "Ye maun be teirt efter the dour traivel ye've had th' day. That fashious body, Peter Morrison, wadna' stir himsel' if it was the Duke's Grace he was cairryin'."

The Gauger needed no pressing to "mak' " his tea; and, as Mrs. Ferguson bustled hospitably about the table, she noticed now and then the suspicion of a smile at the corners of his mouth. The smile was inscrutable to her, but Herbert Stanton could have accounted for it easily enough. He had been sent North to do a difficult piece of work. The excise authorities had come to believe that some smuggling operations were still being carried on in Glen Brear-achan, despite the efforts that had been made to stamp them out. Old Alastair Fraser was suspected of a little willful blindness, because the blood of the North was in his own veins. By the advice of the District Inspector, Fraser had been superannuated, and Herbert Stanton—an Englishman uninfluenced by local feeling and tradition—appointed in his place. Because he had an ambition to succeed in the quest assigned to him, Herbert Stanton smiled. He had noted, with carefully hidden amusement, the impression which his

first appearance in the Glen had produced; and he knew that it would be no hindrance to him in the work he had on hand. Watchfulness might probably be relaxed when it came to be put about that the English Gauger was lacking in "spunk."

II.

THE LADS OF *Castaille Dhu*

SMUGGLING in Glen Brearachan was more of a tradition than a reality. Twenty or thirty years earlier nearly everybody had some kind of connection—either as producer or consumer—with the work of the illicit stills. But the risk and the heavy penalties annexed to it, along with a steadily growing conscience on the subject, limited the traffic by degrees, until, at the time of the English Gauger's coming, there were only two left who continued to put their hands to it; and those two were influenced more by the custom of old times, and the inspiration which a dangerous venture always yields, than by any hope of monetary gain. In a general academic way the Glen still gloried in defrauding the excise; and the tales of the high smuggling days were favorite beguilements for the long winter evenings. But the only remaining representatives of "the lads of *Castaille Dhu*"—as they were called—were Blinkie, the Mole-catcher, and Willie Duff. Blinkie owed his nickname to a habit of working his eyes like one whose nightly occupation put him to some disadvantage in the light of day. Willie Duff had never been known to engage himself in any honest work; but it was generally believed that he managed to eke out a fairly satisfactory existence as

a poacher. Blinkie and Willie Duff clung to the illicit-still traffic after everybody else had given it up; partly because their occupations took them abroad in the darkness, and kept alive the memories of other days; partly for the reason that the wild fever was in their blood, and they could not exist without the hazards and excitements of a smuggler's life. The lads, as they were styled, despite their threescore years and ten, confined their latter-day smuggling to a single period in each year. In the week of the Martinmas term day, three yearly feeing-markets were held within a dozen miles of the Kirk. By immemorial tradition the extra refreshment required to meet the needs of the marketers was supplied from the secret still of the lads of *Castaille Dhu*. Up to this time Blinkie and Willie Duff had never allowed the tradition to become dishonored; it remained to be seen whether the coming of the English Gauger would make a break in the record of fifty years.

As the months went, the Glen folk got accustomed to Herbert Stanton's presence in their midst. In a hesitating, shamefaced way, the shrewder began even to question the accuracy of the first impression that had been formed about him. He fell into their life easily and naturally, like one who meant to make his home among them. Some hints from the Supervisor, in conjunction with Widow Ferguson's warm championship of her lodger's goodness of heart, helped to turn the tide of popular opinion. Without actually making a confession on the subject, the Glen was beginning to treat Herbert Stanton as a man who had

been misjudged. The general feeling was voiced in some words of darkened counsel that the Souter addressed to Blinkie a month or so before the Martinmas term day. But the Mole-catcher only worked his eyes a little more vigorously, exploded in his queer, gurgling laugh, and with a skillful twist, turned the conversation towards the question of clamps *versus* tacketts.

There was a conviction in the Glen that the English Gauger meant to put an end to the history of the lads of *Castaille Dhu*. No one, indeed, could be quite certain that he knew of their continued straggled existence. If he had any information on the subject he must have come by it in some unaccountable way. No native of Glen Brearachan, however much he might disapprove their lawless activities, would breathe a word to the smugglers' hurt. There was a feeling, however, that the Gauger *did* know, and that he intended to put his intelligence to prompt and effective use. The issue was awaited with little more than curiosity, for the reason that neither Blinkie nor Willie Duff stood well in popular respect. They were both in the habit of carrying their drinking beyond the limits that put a bound to what was regarded as legitimate; and, in more ways than one, they had made themselves a heartsore to decent, Kirk-going folk. As the Souter remarked, in discussing the subject with his cronies at one of their Saturday evening cracks, "if the Gauger caught the two o' them, the Glen wad maybe no' be long in murnin's."

There was another feeling, however, about the English Gauger's intentions towards the lads of *Castaille*

Dhu, in the breast of one of the inmates of the Lettoch Farm, at the edge of the Kirkmichael brae. Katie Scott noted the approach of Martinmas with growing dread, because the two smugglers of the Glen had induced her only brother, and the Pittaraig boys, to join them in their last year's stilling.

Tom Scott was not exactly a ne'er-do-well, and nobody charged him with being utterly "feckless," or wanting in discretion. He was commonly believed to have the making of a right sort of man in him; but there was a sullen recklessness in his disposition which had either been begotten, or very strongly fostered, by his father's sourness and lack of judgment. In a fit of passion, aroused by some unreasonable words of paternal reproach, Tom had thrown in his lot in the previous year with the lads of *Castaille Dhu*. Twelve months might probably have brought him to a better frame of mind, but his sister feared, in the wisdom of her nineteen years, that it would take a longer time than that to put the cooling of discretion into the hot blood of twenty-one.

As the days sped, Katie grew increasingly anxious and ill-at-ease, and kept a furtively watchful eye upon her brother's nightly movements. The fear that vexed her heart was not imaginary. One night, about a month before Martinmas, Tom slipped out of his room at the end of the stable, between ten and eleven o'clock, and tried to steal across the yard without disturbing the slumbering family in the house. There was one wakeful member of the family, however, who heard his stealthy steps, and hurried to the kitchen door.

"Tom!" the sister called in sudden alarm, after softly closing the door behind her. "Tom, ye're no' gaun' oot so late as this, are ye?"

"I'll no' be long," was the brother's repressive answer; and, without further explanation of his nocturnal movements, he continued his arrested progress towards the gate.

But Katie was not going to give him up without a struggle. She ran across the yard. Before Tom could reach the gate she had her hand on the latch, and was fronting him with a pleading in her eyes that no other lad in the Glen could have stood against for more than a moment.

"Dinna gang oot the nicht, Tom," she entreated. "The Gaugers are seekin' the lads o' *Castaille Dhu*. Widow Ferguson was sayin' only last Setterday that three o' the Aberfeldie men are stoppin' wi' the Supervisor the noo."

"Hoots, Katie, ye're oot o' yer judgment! Is it yon English birkie that's frichted ye? Ye needna fear for him. He hesna the fushion o' a docken."

"He's maybe no' as fushionless as ye think," Katie answered. "And as sure's ye're stan'in' there ye'll come to hairm if ye dinna bide at hame th' nicht."

"Havers!" was Tom's uncivil rejoinder. "The lads got the bree stilled, and I'm promised to gie them a hand wi' the shiftin' o't."

"Think o' yer mither, Tommy. If onything wes t' happen ye she wadna get the better o't the langest day she lived. The Gauger——"

"Gauger here an' Gauger there, I'm no' gaun' back on my word!"

That was Tom's final answer to his sister's pleading. As the last words left his mouth he took a run towards the low fence on the right side of the gate, and, with a light touch on the top rail, vaulted to the other side.

"Tom! Tommy!" Katie shrieked in desperation. But the cry fell out into the night's hollow shrill and echoless, like the wail of a curlew that has lost his mate, for Tom had vanished.

Katie went slowly back to the kitchen. The other members of the household were all in bed. For her there was no rest that night. She stood at the four-paned window, straining piteously out into the darkness, and feeling the throbs of the big eight-day clock, behind the door in the passage, like the beating of a hammer in her brain.

"I canna bear it," she moaned. "Tom'll be caught and put in the jile, and it'll break my mither's heart!"

With the swift, still energy which sudden resolution begets, she caught up a shawl that lay on the window-sill, and, wrapping it about her head, moved on tiptoe towards the door. It was a wild, half-formed purpose that filled her mind, but Katie never paused until she found herself in the deep shadow of the larch trees that crown the east end of the Kirkmichael brae. She was nearly a mile from her home, in a direction almost opposite to the road that her brother had taken half an hour before.

There was method in poor Katie's mad-like race.

She knew that the lads, for the better hiding of their lawless deeds, were whispered to be oftener at the old lime-kiln above Balnald than in the cellars of *Castaille Dhu*. To-night they were at the *Castaille*, as the direction of her brother's flight had shown; but it was just possible that, although their exact location was known to her, the Gaugers might not have discovered it yet. They would probably make their first descent upon the lime-kiln, as that was the most distant and unlikely of the two places. If her hope proved to be well founded, Katie might still be able to save her brother, although she had hardly got calmness of mind enough to think of a way in which it could be done. On the other hand, if the Gaugers knew more than she imagined to be probable, and were already closing in on *Castaille Dhu*, Katie could do nothing. Tom was lost.

Another quarter of a mile, more warily footed, brought the frightened girl to the edge of the rocks above the "dookin'-dam" on the Kinnaird burn. She could see in the darkness, to which her eyes had become accustomed, the old, empty lime-kiln, about a hundred and fifty yards to the north of the other bank. A muir-bird, that seemed to be ware of things untoward in the neighborhood of his lonely home, rose into the air with a sudden shriek, and set poor Katie's pulses racing. But there was no other stir or sign of life about the lime-kiln. As the minutes that seemed to stretch into hours went slowly by, the girl's heart sank. The Gaugers, she was beginning to fear, had laid their plans only too well. Not for a moment did she comfort herself with the hope that her instinct

might have been at fault. Katie was convinced that the Gaugers were out that night, and, as the lime-kiln showed no appearance of life, she concluded that they had somehow possessed themselves of information accurate enough to send them direct to *Castaille Dhu*.

The heart-sick girl was giving up her last hope when her sharp eyes caught the faint glimmer of a light, down in the hollow of the burn, about three hundred yards away. The light had given only one quick flash, but it was enough to reveal the presence of three or four stealthily moving figures; and Katie's hope was realized after all; the Gaugers were going to make their first attack upon the lime-kiln. With a gasp of relief she began to creep cautiously back from the brow of the bank, quickening her pace by degrees, as she drew farther and farther from the burn, until, in less than a minute, she was running with all the desperate speed of her young and nimble feet. Backward in the direction of *Castaille Dhu* the girl sped, through stubble and turnip-fields, across dykes and ditches, never pausing for an instant until she drew up, spent and breathless, at the junction of the Moulin and Kirkmichael roads, below her father's farm.

There was a half-mile's journey on the road. Katie walked the distance briskly, yet with the weariness of one who did not know in what moment an unseen watcher might arrest her steps. A little on the near side of Balnakeilly gate she crossed the fence and took the path through the marshy meadow flats that led almost in a straight line to the ruins of *Castaille Dhu*. When she got to the edge of the stony rise, on which

the grim old keep had stood for more years than men could tell, Katie's courage began for the first time to fail her a little. Queer, uncanny tales were whispered in the glow of the winter peats about the ruined and desolate castle. Its roof had tumbled down upon a company of wild and godless revelers, and the dead men's ghosts were said to haunt the unholy place, between the midnight and the mouth of day, with awful moans, and cursing of things in heaven and things on earth. The riot of the dead men might begin at any moment; but Katie had a fire in her blood that night that helped to kill the coldness of her fear. She heartened herself with one deep gasp of the nipping November air, and plunged inward among the ruins of the horrid keep. Stones from the crumbling walls lay about in mounds like the graves in the Kirk-yard; nettles breast high choked the narrow roads between the gruesome heaps. In and out, with wildcat stealth, Katie threaded her difficult way. She did not know at what exact point to look for the cellar in which the lads of *Castaille Dhu* carried on their reckless trade; but instinct drew her towards the deep shadows that filled the angle between the two highest walls on the east side. With her bleeding hands she bent the nettles back to press inwards still a pace or two. Something stayed her feet—a sound of distant, earth-choked voices. Katie strained to listen, when suddenly a loud burst of foolish laughter struck her to the heart with the icy stound of death. There was a peril in *Castaille Dhu* that she had not prepared herself to face. The lads were drinking, and in their midnight madness they

might put shame upon a lone and helpless lass. Katie had a strong mind, in that moment, to turn her steps and flee; it was only a thought of her mother that held her to her purpose. She had come out to save her brother, and was not to be daunted by any peril real or illusory. Let ghosts writhe in spectral rage, and men take it as they pleased, the lass o' the Lettoch was to lift her voice that night in *Castaille Dhu* for love of her mother, and her mother's son!

"Tom!" she called with all the feverish strength of her lungs, "Tommy! Tom Scott!"

There was a sudden hush in the hidden haunt of the lads of *Castaille Dhu*, and, after less than a minute's interval, a wary movement behind the nettles at the point of the angle between the walls. Katie was drawing breath for another call when her brother answered out of the darkness, in a voice that terror had frozen into steadiness again,

"Who's there? Did a' body cry?"

"It's me, Tom—Katie, your sister! Come away, quick. The Gaugers are oot; they're on the Moulin road, an' they'll be here in an oor. Dinna let them catch ye, Tommy. Come awa hame."

"What the de'il's brought you here?" the brother answered with a roughness that betokened his relief from spectral fears. "This is no' the place for an honest lass. Awa hame wi' ye at once, ye besom, or ye'll maybe be sorry for yersel'."

"O, Tom," Katie implored, "dinna, dinna be thrawn and foolish. The Gaugers——"

"Gaugers," the lad interrupted in a yell of half-

drunken fury. "What div I car for a' the Gaugers in Athole? I'll gauger them if yon English spurly (spindle) shanks and his like come meddlin' wi' me. I'm promised to cairry hame a keg o' the bree the nicht, an' there's neither man nor maid that'll hinder me. And a gran,' peaty bree it is, too," he concluded with inebriate enthusiasm. "There's no' a headache in the gallon o't."

"If there's no' a headache in the gallon o't, there's plenty blethers in less," Katie retorted, with proper sisterly severity.

It was useless to attempt further reasoning. Tom was just sober enough to be hopelessly intractable. His sister felt angry and baffled. She was on the point of breaking down in a fit of helpless weeping when a sudden inspiration sent the blood to her brain again. But it called her to a kind of daring that in all her life she had never thought to try; and her heart took the deadly chill upon it for the second time.

"Tommy!" she called again in the quick, authoritative tone that generally reduced the lad to obedience, "bide where ye are for a quarter o' an oor. I'll be back then, and we'll gang hame thegither."

"Back? If ye daur to show face——"

"Mind," Katie interrupted, "ye're no' t' stir till I come back."

Without waiting for an answer, the girl pushed out through the nettles, and beyond the walls of the ruined keep, to the path across the moat-lands that would bring her to a point on the Moulin road, not more than a hundred yards from the Manse gate. Katie was fleet

of foot, and she ran with all her speed. There was not a moment to be lost, and, moreover, the project in her mind would not bear to be considered calmly; it needed to be entered upon in hot haste or her courage would fail, and she might not venture it at all.

III.

THE WILES OF KATIE SCOTT

AT the Manse gate Katie Scott paused in a moment's miserable indecision. Her brain was reeling with excitement and terror; she put her hand to her side to dull the sharp beating of her heart. The least glimmer of light about the gaunt, whitewashed house would have made the way seem easier; but the Manse windows were all cold and dead. There was no sign of life anywhere—except the occasional caw of a wakeful rook from the nests at the top of the Minister's elm-trees. The girl shook with dread and shame; but she had no thought of turning back or giving up the wild purpose that had framed itself in her distracted mind.

Running lightly up the grassy border of the Manse drive, Katie reached the wicket in the near leaf of the back-yard gate. The latch answered noiselessly to her timid touch; and, in less time than it takes to tell, she was tapping at the window pane of the third window from the kitchen door on the right-hand side. As everybody in the Glen knew, that was the window of Janet McCormick's room. The first summons brought no response, and Katie tapped again a little more loudly. This time her knock had evidently been heard; there was a sound as of someone stirring within. After

a third and gentler tap the lower sash of the window was cautiously raised to the height of about three inches.

"Who's there?" the disturbed housekeeper queried in a voice that shook with the terror of darkness.

"It's me, Mrs. McCormick—Katie o' the Lettoch!"

"Keep me, lassie! What tak's ye oot at this oor o' th' nicht? Is there onything the maitter?"

"Mysie's bad, and she's cryin' for the Minister. Div ye think Maister Carment wad come back wi' me?"

Katie's plan for the rescue of her brother was fairly launched now.

"Ye needna fear for that, lassie. But ye'll be gettin' the doctor forbye, will ye no'?"

Poor Katie had never anticipated a question so natural as this. Her reply was hardly an instant delayed, however, for wit sharpens in extremity.

"They're sayin'," she answered with the readiness of the desperate, "that Dr. Irvine's wi' the Duke th' day, and winna be back from the Castle afore th' morn's nicht."

"That's a peety, noo," said the sympathetic housekeeper. "But," she added encouragingly, "there's some thinks Maister Carment's nettle-broth is better than a' the Doctor's medicines ye can buy. Bide a wee, and I'll open the door t' ye, and syne go up the stair and steer the Minister."

"Dinna fash yersel' wi' the door," Katie hastily rejoined. "I'll go roond to the stable and put the mare in the dog-cairt."

"Will ye manage yersel', lassie? Ye'll better bide till Maister Carment comes doon t' gie ye a hand."

"I'll manage fine, and maybe it'll save time if I take the dog-cairt roond the road and meet Maister Carment at the stile below Auchlat."

That was Katie Scott's plan for getting her fractious brother home, and, in fear lest Mrs. McCormick might have some objection to offer to it, she ran round to the Manse stable as soon as the words were out of her mouth.

The Minister's old mare had never been harnessed and yoked in quicker time. Before the housekeeper had succeeded in making Mr. Carment understand the nature of the summons that called him from his rest, Katie had drawn the dog-cart up as near to the walls of the *Castaille Dhu* as it could get. Old Bess was accustomed to stand untended, and the girl left her to herself as she threaded her way for the second time among the stone-heaps and through the nettles. There was less of terror in her heart than there had been when she made her first venture into the dismal, ghost-speckled precincts of *Castaille Dhu*. She had dared so much already that her resolution was hardening to the point of recklessness.

"Tom!" she called, and this time with a stoutness that revealed the rise of heart which successful tactics invariably occasion.

The answer came sooner than she looked for.

"Is that you, Katie?" and there was an unexpected suggestion of "dour" humility in the brother's tones. He had told the lads of his sister's visit and its purport.

The old men only laughed, and, with coarse mouthing put a shame upon the girl that filled Tom's heart—half-intoxicated as he was—with anger at them, and her, and himself. But the Pittaraig boys treated the matter differently; the mention of the Gaugers terrified them, and they betook themselves to immediate flight.

Tom was fain to make his escape, too; but, with a stubbornness that was partly constitutional and partly the effect of his overindulgence in drink, he stuck to his bond. He had promised the lads that he would help them with the shifting of the "bree," and without the keg assigned to him he would not move a step.

"Come quick, Tommy!" Katie urged when her brother's position had been made clear. "Ye can take th' keg wi' ye. There's no' a meenit to spare. I've got a dog-cairt oot-by."

Staggering and stumbling among the stones and nettles, with a two-gallon keg in his arms, Tom Scott followed his sister to the point beyond the walls where the Minister's mare was standing in professional patience.

"In wi't!" Katie enjoined when she had lowered the flap of the dog-cart.

"Where got ye——?"

"Never mind th' noo," the girl interrupted. "In wi't, and get in yersel' aneath the seats and oot o' sicht."

It was a difficult position that had been assigned to him, but the rising imperative in his sister's tones seemed to bring the Gaugers nearer every moment, and Tom made no demur. Huddled up under the seats, with his head at the back of the dog-cart on the

left-hand side, and his feet disposed in such a way that Katie could block them with her own from trespassing into the space that Mr. Carment would soon be occupying, the youthful smuggler was ingloriously carried away from the perils of *Castaille Dhu*. Ten minutes' sharp driving brought the dog-cart round to the stile, at which the Minister was to meet it. No time had been lost. Mr. Carment was within a dozen yards of the point where the path by the Auchlat burn joins the Moulin road, when Katie drew old Bess up at the stile.

"I am sorry to hear about your sister's illness, Katie," the Minister began in his kindly way.

Katie felt the shame of her deception for the first time as a stabbing pain in her heart. In a voice, lowered and trembling with a grief that the Minister had no guess of, she answered,

"She's no' just very bad, thank you kindly, sir; but she'll be the better for seein' you, although I think shame to be takin' ye oot this oor o' th' nicht."

"Oh, don't trouble about that. I am only glad to come," Mr. Carment replied in his usual hearty way; "and I am more than glad to hear that Mysie is not so ill as Janet McCormick seemed to think."

"Are you going to be the driver, Katie?" he added, as the girl showed no sign of relinquishing the reins.

"If ye dinna mind, sir, I'd like to drive you th' nicht," Katie answered. She knew that she dare not move from her place, or Tom's huddled-up presence would be instantly detected. Moreover, there was a supreme effort in tactics awaiting her at the end of the

journey, and she needed to keep the reins in her own hands if it were to be attempted with any hope of success.

Old Bess had hardly settled down into her accustomed pace, after expressing, by several decided jerks at the reins, her dissatisfaction with the strange hand that continued to guide her steps, when the occupants of the dog-cart were startled by a sudden imperative summons to stop. Five or six dimly outlined figures closed quickly in about the arrested vehicle, and one of them flashed a bull's-eye lantern full in the Minister's face.

"Oh! is it you, Mr. Carment?" exclaimed the holder of the lantern in surprise. "I beg your pardon, sir, for treating you with so little ceremony."

It was the English Gauger who spoke, and every word cut poor Katie's fluttering heart as with a knife. She could only sit in her place, still and mute, with a sick dread that the terror in the loud beating of her heart would rouse the Gauger's suspicion.

"It's late traveling, Mr. Stanton," the Minister replied, "but I have been called to the bedside of a girl who is ill. Are you on the tracks of the lads of *Castaile Dhu*?"

"Well—we are," the Gauger admitted with official hesitation, "and, as time presses, we had better not detain you any longer."

Katie's first impulse, as she flicked the mare with the whip, was to lift up a prayer of thanksgiving in her heart. But she was restrained by the feeling that, in the midst of her deception of the Minister, religious

exercises were somewhat unseasonable. The members of Mr. Carment's flock were sound on the connection between faith and works.

What the subjects of conversation between herself and the Minister were during their half-hour's drive together Katie Scott never could recall. She had some vague remembrance afterwards of a desperate struggle to keep her head cool and her answers coherent. But other things were almost chased out of mind by the excitement which kindled in her heart for many a day, whenever she thought of her last supreme ruse.

They had arrived at the gate on the down side of the turnip-field which opened into the Lettoch farm, at the junction of the Moulin and Kirkmichael roads. The rough cart-track bent round the Knowe on which the house stood in a quarter-mile curve. For travelers on foot or on horseback there was a nearer way to the house along the edge of the Knowe on the other side. Katie meant to get Mr. Carment to walk by the shorter road, and leave her free to press on with the dog-cart, in order that she might have time to warn the folk at home of the part they had to play. But it was difficult to find a feasible excuse. When they had come within a few yards of the point at which the bridle-path broke from the road, desperation quickened the girl's inventive faculties.

"It's a peety," she remarked in tones of well-assumed concern, "that Bess is goin' lame."

"Lame, is she?" the Minister exclaimed. "I am sorry to hear that. Perhaps there's a stone in her foot."

"That's what I was thinkin' masel'," the unhappy maid assented.

"Stop, my lassie, and I'll get down and see."

It was a safe venture to play upon Mr. Carment's feelings of compassion for the horse that had carried him about in all weathers for over twenty years. He alighted from the cart, tapped each fetlock in turn, and, as old Bess obediently lifted her feet one by one, carefully searched the four frogs with his fingers.

"There's no stone here, Katie," he said, when his investigation was concluded. "She's just a bit tired, I expect. Poor old Bess has been doing more than her fair share in the last three days."

The Minister moved towards the step. He was about to climb into the seat again, when Katie stayed him with the hazard,

"Maybe, if it's no' too much, ye wadna mind takin' the path, Mr. Carment, and I'll get her roond the hill easier. It's gey steep at the top end."

The Minister accepted the suggestion with unsuspecting readiness—the readiness of a man who was always merciful to his beast, and, as soon as she judged him to be out of ear shot, Katie drew up again.

"Oot'n there, Tom Scott," she ordered, "and tak' yer keg wi' ye!"

Tom, who had been sobered and almost reduced to despair by the jolting of the dog-cart, was willing enough to obey. He scrambled out at the back of the vehicle, and lifted his unlawful treasure to the ground. The cruel cramping of his legs, and the downward hang of his head, on a journey that he would keep in

mind for the remainder of his days, loosened his joints and made his brain reel. He staggered as one who was still intoxicated, and, failing to establish his equilibrium, sank helplessly down upon the keg of "bree" in the middle of the road. Katie flung one glance of contemptuous reproach at her brother, ingloriously enthroned, and drove off without addressing to him another word. In the last reach of that night's journey, poor old Bess was stretched, notwithstanding her supposed fatigue and lameness, to the swiftest paces she had tried since the days of her forgotten fillyhood.

The dog-cart dashed through the open gate at the back end of the yard, and, throwing the reins down, Katie sprang from her seat and hurried into the house. There were only six or seven minutes at the most to be reckoned upon before Mr. Carment would make his appearance. Without pausing even to light the lamp in the kitchen window, the girl ran along the narrow passage to the bedroom at the end where her parents lay in unconscious slumber.

"Faither!" she cried, as her fingers searched the end of the mantel-shelf for the tinder-box, that lay in the same spot from the year's beginning to its close. "Faither, get up! Maister Carment'll be here in five meenits. I tell't him Mysie was bad to get Tom away from *Castaille Dhu*."

"Who's that? And what are ye sayin'?" John Scott replied in the mazed way of a man newly stirred from his sleep.

"Are ye oot o' yer judgment, lassie?" he added, as he began to realize that Katie was in the room, and

started up like a corpse brought to sudden life, his eyes blinking in bewilderment under the ample flannel night-cap that protected his head.

"O, faither, get up!" the girl pleaded in an excited, half-coherent way, "I went for Maister Carment to see Mysie to get Tom oot o' the grip o' the Gaugers. I'll tell ye a' about it efter, but ye maun put it through wi' the Minister."

"Put it through wi' the Minister!" her father exclaimed, as he began dimly to realize the part he was expected to play, "Man an' boy, I've kent Maister Carment for near han' forty year, and div ye daur t' say that I'm t' look him in the face and tell him a lee—and me spoken for an elder o' the kirk? Think shame t' yersel'!"

"Up wi' ye, John!" Mrs. Scott commanded at the close of her husband's protestation; and the old man writhed as one who had received a stab in the back.

Only once or twice in her life had meek Eppie Scott spoken in such tones of authority to her proud, masterful man. But on each occasion John had sunk before her unwonted assertion of strength in helpless, lamb-like docility.

"The lassie's been workin' t' keep the shame from us, and we'll no' let it come to her withoot tryin' t' see her through. Up wi' ye, and be ready to meet the Minister! Just haud yer tongue, and leave the rest t' me!" With these vigorous injunctions, Mrs. Scott hustled her mazed and conscience-stricken husband, with a blanket about his shoulders, into the kitchen.

When Mr. Carment reached the kitchen door, John

Scott was waiting to receive him with a lamp in his hand, and a scared look on his face that the good man easily mistook for fatherly anxiety about the condition of Mysie.

"I am sorry to hear your bad news, John," he began in his kindly, comforting way. "The lassie is not in any danger, I trust."

"Oh, she'll win through," the old man answered, in a voice that shook with a trouble at which Mr. Carment could not guess. "Just tak' a seat, sir; the guidwife 'll be here in a meenit."

Meantime, Katie and her mother were developing the conspiracy in the bed-room in quick, excited whispers.

"Hoo did ye no' mind," Mrs. Scott asked, in her single moment of helplessness, "that Mysie's sleepin' at the bothy th' nicht?"

Katie's heart sank; she had quite forgotten that the ploughman left only that morning to bring home some sheep from Glen Shee, and that her sister had arranged to keep his wife company for the night.

"But never fash yersel'!" the stout-hearted little woman added, fairly roused now to the duty of saving her daughter's credit. "Ower the window wi' ye, and bring her hame."

The bothy lay only about three hundred yards from the house, and Katie needed no second bidding. She scrambled through the little window; fled like a roe-deer round the end of the stable, across the stack-yard, and down to the little hut beside the burn on the east

side. A sharp summons brought the frightened younger sister to the inside of the bothy door.

Katie had no time to waste in explanations.

"Come wi' me, Mysie," she called; "Maister Carment's here t' see ye. Ye're to let on ye're no' weel. It's to keep Tom from the Gaugers."

Half-awake, clad **only** in a flannel sleeping-gown, and wholly dazed and frightened, Mysie yielded to her sister's importunity. In less time than it takes to tell, the invalid was happed in the blankets on her mother's bed, and bidden to carry her part through with the best skill she could summon to her aid.

When Mrs. Scott brought the Minister "ben," it was quite a safe thing to venture the opinion that Mysie had perhaps caught some sort of fever. Her eyes were gleaming with terror and amazement; the sharp summons and swift run through the night air had flushed her cheeks and reduced her to breathless silence.

"Yes," the Minister admitted, after letting his cool hand rest for a moment on the girl's hot forehead, "she is slightly fevered. But if you keep her warm, and let her have nothing but milk and water for a day or two, she will soon be herself again. By the end of the week you can begin to give her this. It is a wonderful remedy."

While he was speaking, Mr. Carment produced from the tail pocket of his coat a black quart-bottle. It contained an evil-looking decoction of young nettle-shoots that was better known to the taste in Glen Brearachan than any medicine in Dr. Irvine's labora-

tory. There were at least a dozen men and women living at the moment, not to mention the number by whom the matter was feelingly referred to on their death-beds, who were in the habit of ascribing recovery and invigoration in an hour of extremity to "the Minister's nettle broth."

Katie held the candle so that the light might not fall too strongly on her sister's face, which was every moment showing clearer signs of a speedier recovery than Mr. Carment might have regarded as entirely natural. She began to breathe more freely now, as if the terrors and difficulties of that eventful night had almost come to an end. But there was a new and bitterer piercing of her heart when Mr. Carment asked them all to kneel at Mysie's bedside. Katie rose from her knees with the stemmed tear-floods in passionate outburst; and—if she had noted them—there was nothing to comfort her in the queer, drawn look upon her father's face, and the melancholy twitching about the corners of her mother's mouth. There was a shame upon them all; and they scarcely dared to meet the gaze of their old Minister's cool gray eyes.

IV.

BREAKFAST at the Lettoch, on the morning after Mr. Carment's nocturnal visit, was a melancholy meal. Gloom lay on the brows and silence chained the lips of the family group about the kitchen board. Marjorie, the servant-lass, searched for an explanation of the unwonted depression in the face of the halflin', who shared with her the little table between the dresser and the gurnal. But Jock Lamont's stolid countenance gave no clue to the unraveling of the mystery. Tom was the most visibly unhappy member of the family circle. He sat shamefaced in his deal chair, at his mother's right hand, making a pretense of supping his porridge, but manifestly more interested in a stolen study of his father's storm-filled face. It was with feelings of undisguised relief that the dismal group broke up, after John Scott had given the thanks, in tones surlier than even he was accustomed to employ, although he was a dour man at the best.

But Tom had not escaped by making his way to the byre, and busying himself in loosening the chains from the necks of the three milk-cows to let them out into the stubble. His father followed him, and, as Tom felt the shadow in the door behind him, he knew that the storm was about to break. The untying of Broonie's neck-chain took a longer time than he had

ever given to it before, for Tom was not in the heart to brave the wrath that must descend upon his stricken head, when he lifted himself up, and turned to look his father in the face.

John Scott began in words of bitter reproach; but there was a quivering about his son's lips, and a new look of contrition in his eyes, that put his anger to a sudden death.

"I'm real sorry, faither," the lad began, "for a' the trouble I've been makin' for ye. Maybe it wad be better if I was t' tak' Edradour's ares (fee-penny) at Martinmas. He was speakin' t' me about it at the plooin' match on Setterday wes a week."

There was healing for the old man's heart in Tom's new mood. He felt a drawing towards his son that he had not known for years, and there was a shake in his voice as he replied:

"Ye'll no' leave the auld place, lad. Yer mither wadna hear tell o't; and maybe ther's little hairm wroucht efter a's said and done. But ye'll better haste ye and mak' it up wi' Katie; she's gey sair putt'n aboot, I'm thinkin'."

Tom knew exactly where his sister was to be found at that hour of the morning. He crossed the yard to the dairy in the skillion-shed at the back of the kitchen fireplace, and stood in the doorway for a moment, silently watching his sister as she rinsed the milk dishes in cool well water, and stood them up to drip themselves dry on the middle shelf. She had just put the last of them in its place, and was turning to lift the lid of the churn at the back of the door, when Tom

startled her with the sound of better words than she had hoped to hear.

"Katie," he began in a hesitating, awkward way, as he shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, "I think shame t' masel', and I'll no' be puttin' ye about wi' my capers any more."

The girl swung round on the instant, and threw one searching glance at the penitent's face.

"I'm glad t' hear ye say 't, Tom," she replied to him a little coldly. "But I doot ye're ower late. The shame is on me, and I'll no' be able to haud my head up."

"Shame! Whatna shame?" the brother protested, with strange and wholesome warmth. "Shame t' me, if ye like, but it's a prood lassie ye should be th' day. Ther's no' a lad in the Glen but would pairt wi' his two lugs t' get the half done for him that you've done for me. I'm dootin' if the Minister himsel' wadna be ettlin' t' gie ye a faitherly kiss if he hed the richts o' the story."

Tom Scott favored his mother. He was seldom roused into eloquence and decision, but, on the rare occasions when he surpassed himself, the effect on others was instantly apparent. His present hot and vigorous pronouncement brought a quick flush to his sister's cheeks, and a sparkle of light into her big, dark eyes.

"Haud yer tongue!" she replied, in softer—almost playful—protest. "Dinna be tryin' t' come ower me wi' yer havers."

There was an accent of sincerity in Tom's astonishing outburst that his sister felt to be soothing and

heartsome. She began to move briskly about the dairy, in preparation for the butter-making, with some of the old spring in her step. Her feelings about the deception she had practiced upon Mr. Carment were still touched with misgiving, but she could not altogether disbelieve the assertion that the Minister would judge her leniently if, as Tom put it, "he hed the richts o' the story."

An hour later in the morning, Mrs. Scott smiled as she bent over the tub at the outside of the kitchen door, and caught the sound of singing from the direction of the dairy.

"The lassie's no' t' break her he'rt efter a'," she murmured to herself; and there was motherly satisfaction in her eyes as she watched her daughter flitting back and forth in her usual bright, quick way—from the dairy to the kitchen, from the kitchen to the well, and back to the dairy again.

No one who could have seen Katie o' the Lettoch in the days that immediately followed upon her *Castaille Dhu* adventure, would have hesitated to subscribe to all that her brother said about her in his single moment of insight and eloquence. She was looking her best—and that was more than any man in the Glen could put his tongue to in the way of description. Her heart was too fresh and young to hold the gloom upon it long. Katie was her old clear self again in less than a week's time, and, after her first Sabbath at the Kirk, she began to laugh a little at the remembrance of her midnight fears and wiles.

That first Sabbath was a sore day for Katie Scott.

Every time she felt the Minister's eyes upon her there was a conscious quickening of her heart-beats. But it was not from Mr. Carment that the worst stings came. If she happened to lift her head from the Psalm-book, or steal a peep at the sermoner under the rim of her hat, in the direction of the Supervisor's pew, she was sure to meet the grave, full gaze of the English Gauger.

Herbert Stanton had surprised the Glen by joining in its simple form of religious worship. It had been taken for granted that he would connect himself with the little English chapel at Logierait, which was only four miles away. But when he quietly settled down in the corner of the Supervisor's pew, at the left-hand side of the pulpit, there was some hesitation in deciding whether he ought to be commended or blamed. Darkened and trifling as the rites of the English Church undoubtedly were, it would have seemed more manful if the Gauger had shown the courage of his creed. Roderick Farquharson once ventured to give Mr. Stanton a hint of the feeling in the Glen in reference to his ecclesiastical conduct. As he phrased it himself, he "hed the breath knocked oot o' his body" when the Gauger quietly replied that he had been brought up in the Presbyterian faith of his Scottish mother—whose maiden name was *Farquharson*. On more than one occasion after this disclosure, the elder was heard to quote with approval the opinion of one whom he described vaguely as "a cussin o' mine."

On that first Sabbath, after her midnight adventure, Katie Scott could have wished that the English Gauger

had fulfilled the expectations of the Glen in the matter of his religious exercises. At any rate, she would have been spared much discomfort if he had been absent from the service of that particular morning. His steady, serious gaze burned her cheeks, and seemed almost to threaten the safety of her heart's secret.

There was some disadvantage to Katie o' the Lettoch in the circumstances of her first personal encounter with the English Gauger. It fell on the day of the half-yearly blanket-washing at the farm on the Kirk-michael brae. Marjorie and the two sisters had got the fire going beside the burn, a little below the bothy, in the elbow of the wooden bridge that carried the cart-road across to the rise of the Knowe. The girls made a fair division of the work between the three of them. While one was in the tub tramping the clothes, the other two attended to the fire and the feeding of the big three-legged pot. When it came to wringing and spreading out the blankets that had been washed and trodden to the sweetness of the morning's creaming, the joined strength of all the six plump young arms was needed.

Katie was in the tub. She liked the tramping; and, as she moved up and down and round and round, in the rhythm that old usage had fixed, she made a heartsome picture in the middle of the steam-clouds—with warm face and merry eyes, round arms bare to the shoulders, and her hair falling loose and wild about her neck like the mane of a three years' filly in the front of a Lammas wind. That was certainly not the situation which she would have selected for her first meet-

ing with Herbert Stanton. But some things are apt to arrange their happenings without paying proper deference to the feelings of a modest—albeit, in this instance, unquestionably roguish—maid. Katie was warming to her work, under the inspiration of a reeling Jacobite song, when a voice from the bridge brought her to instant silence and rest.

“Good morning, Miss Katie! Do you think I might leave my horse in the stable for an hour or two? He has gone lame, and I am afraid he is not fit for the Kirkmichael hill to-day.”

Deftly dropping her coats, and with a sudden rose-flush in her cheeks, the girl looked up to the intruder on the bridge. Her eyes, as Herbert Stanton saw them in that moment, were steady and clear—notwithstanding the tell-tale color in her face—and, by the way they seemed to catch up the ripple about her lips, gave her an enticing expression of demure roguishness.

“Good morning, sir!” she answered. “If you’ll go up to the yard, you’ll find my faither aboot the barn or the byre somewhere.”

“Thank you! I’ll find him,” and with a lift of his Glengarry bonnet in the handsome English way, the Gauger took the Knowe.

“Losh keep me!” Marjorie exclaimed when he was out of earshot. “Hoo did we no’ hear him comin’? And’you sich a like sicht, Katie!”

For answer, Katie only laughed, and, with now and then a stolen glance at the manful, mounting figure on the Knowe, lifted her song again in a slightly higher key.

There was little, it would have seemed, at least so far as Katie was concerned, to encourage the English Gauger in another visit to the Lettoch farm. Yet, as a matter of fact, he came the next week again; and week after week on his way to Kirkmichael, until the manifest insufficiency of his excuses began to set Mysie making eyes at the servant lass behind her sister's back. Even about the discreetly folded lips of good Mrs. Scott there grew at times the suspicion of a smile, when Herbert Stanton continued his weekly visits after his imagination had begun to fail him in the matter of excuses. Everybody on the farm knew that it was for sight of Katie's face, and to get within sound of her voice and touch of her hand, that the English Gauger came so often to the Lettoch. And, because there are kindly powers at the help of a true man in the quest of a maid, it came about that the intercourse between these two grew to be close and free as the months went by. For the home-keeping Highland lass, the Gauger tried to picture some of the brave sights that were to be seen in the land of his birth. In return, Katie schooled him in the queer lore of the Glen, and taught him to speak the wild, sweet name-words with something less of a stranger's tongue. Other speech there was between them, too, which is not for the telling.

There were no exclamations of surprise in the Glen when the intercourse between the English Gauger and Katie o' the Lettoch ripened, as such intercourse is apt to do between lad and lass. Katie herself made no confession on the subject, even to her own heart, until

her Day had actually dawned. When it did come, it was a Day for a Queen, the sweetest and heartsomest in all the year—the opening of the bonnie May month. She had gone down to the hollow of the burn, below the Knowe, in search of the wild roses that were beginning to unfold their timid petals at the wooing of the spring's breath. The Gauger found her, bonnetless and happy, with the May-flush in her cheeks and a song upon her lips, as she tiptoed towards a rosebud almost out of reach.

"Let me get it for you, Miss Katie."

And Herbert Stanton pulled the rose.

There was no start of coy surprise when the lass o' the Lettoch heard the Gauger's voice, and turned to look him frankly in the face, and to take the rose that he was holding out to her. She had felt him coming for nearly five minutes—ever since the gate at the angle of the roads had creaked on its rusty hinges; and there was truth and candor fixed between these two before the time of this burnside happening.

For one short morning hour they lingered together at the water-side. When it had flown, Katie would have led the way up to the house on the Knowe, if Herbert Stanton had not delayed her with a look in his eyes and the accent in his voice that the heart of every true maid understands.

"Katie," he said, "I love you. You are all the world to me. Do you think you could trust your bonnie life with the English Gauger?"

The lass o' the Lettoch looked into the speaker's face. Her expression was intended to suggest mental

perplexity and chastening of spirit; but there was a hint of roguery in the twinkle of her eyes.

"Maybe," she whispered, "ye wadna be wantin' me if ye kent aboot somethin'."

"Kent about something! What is the something, lassie? It will make me want you more than ever."

"I'm no' so sure. Wait till ye hear," and with these words of caution Katie began her tale. She told the Gauger the whole story of her *Castaille Dhu* adventure—her wiles, and fears, and troublings of conscience.

Herbert Stanton listened in amazement. He had been congratulating himself on the success of his raid upon the lads of *Castaille Dhu*, and, indeed, he had received as well the commendations of his superiors. The two old smugglers had been taken captive, and sentenced to the penalties which their law-breaking involved; but, until he heard the tale from Katie's lips, the Gauger never knew that others had escaped. It did not seem, however, by the first words that came to his lips when the girl had finished her story, as if the tidings caused him much distress. On the contrary, there was a noticeable thrill of admiration in his voice as he asked:

"Is that all that keeps you from me, Katie?"

"I canna—mind—o' anything else—th' noo," the girl replied, with slow deliberateness, and a pretty pucker of her brows, like the roguish maid she was.

"My bonnie rogue!"—and Herbert Stanton drew her with a strong arm-clasp to his heart. "My brave

smuggler lass! You have come to your prison now, and the sentence is, FOR LIFE."

The captive did not appear to shrink from the fate that had befallen her, if one might judge by the glow in her cheeks, and the light behind the mist in her big black eyes. Neither did she speak in protest against the tender touches of a cool, strong hand upon her hair, or the pressure of warm lips upon her mouth and eyes and brow. For it was by such tell-tale tokens as these that Herbert Stanton made it clear that a Southerner—despite the inferiority of his race—is in need of no schooling from the Glen in the way of a man with a maid.

And that was the vengeance which the English Gauger wreaked for the shame that had been put upon his country at the rout of Bannockburn. Yet even Geordie McAllum—and he was ill to please in matter of Southern valor—was never heard a second time to question the Gauger's "spunk."

THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY

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I.

There was no school in the Glen on Saturday; and the annual vacation extended from the 12th of August to the end of September. But the boys looked forward to the Queen's Birthday, as though that were the one holiday of the year. Loyalty may have had something to do with it. But there can be little doubt that the enthusiasm about the Queen's Birthday was chiefly due to the circumstance that it occurred in the middle of the spring, when the fishing was at its best. Nearly every boy in the Glen went out with his rod on the 24th of May; and the gamekeepers had more than they could do to watch the Laird's preserves. Most of the burns within a radius of five miles from the Kirk were open to all natives of the Glen. But woe betide the youth who tried to slip a line into either Loch Vallachan or The Broom!

On the afternoon of the 23rd May, in the year '68, Rob Carment and Geordie McAllum bounded through the schoolhouse door like two pointers let loose from the leash.

"Hooray! for the Queen's Birthday!" Geordie vociferated with all the power of his lungs, as he snatched his friend's bonnet and threw it onto the ground.

"Hooray! for the Queen's Birthday!" Rob replied. And just as Geordie was preparing to kick the bonnet into Alack McInroy's cabbage plot, he caught him deftly by the heel, and brought him to earth.

"I'll be awin' ye a coup for that, Rob," was Geordie's rueful remark, as he began to caress his injured knees.

"Ye'll get plenty chances th' morn. But it's time we were settin' where we're gaun'. Div ye ken where the troot are takin' the noo?"

There was a suggestion of mischief in Rob's eyes as he asked the question, and Geordie was on his guard.

"What div ye say t' Kinnaird burn?" he asked cautiously. "Th'll be ower many there, I doot. The Seatons are gaun', and Bob Scott, and Spurly Shanks, and I dinna ken hoo mony mair. But there's no' anither place t' gang till. The Dalosh is ower sma'. The Lettoch's pushioned wi' the dye mill; and there's no' a troot left in the Brearachan."

"Kinnaird burn! We micht as well fish in the washin' tub," Rob rejoined contemptuously.

"What div ye say t' Loch Vallachan?" he added, in his most deliberate tones.

"Loch Vallachan! Ye daurna dae't, Rob." And Geordie's heart trembled at the bare thought of it. "Wullie Kelman said he would hae us jiled if he caught us on the muir again."

"There's bigger fouk than Wullie Kelman," was Rob's impressive reply. "I speired at the Laird yesterday morning, when he was waitin' at the gate t' tak' Uncle Wullie t' the Presbytery. He's gi'en us leave t' fish in Loch Vallachan th' morn."

"The Laird's gi'en us leave! Ye're no' jokin' me, are ye, Rob?"

"It's as sure's deith, Geordie. He got in an afa dander when I askit him first, and said he wad hae us afore the shirra if we pit a fit on the muir. But something cam' ower him of a sudden like when he seen Uncle Wullie comin' through the door. He cried t' me t' come back, and said we nicht baith o' us fish in Loch Vallachan th' morn, if we keepit t' the road, and didna meddle wi' the birds' nests."

"Gosh! Robbie man, that's gran'. But we'll hae t' start early, and I doot if I'll wauken in time. I'm terrible hard t' steer in the mornin'."

"Dinna ye fash yersel' aboot steerin'. Gin ye tie th' end o' yer fishin' line t' yer big tae and drop the reel ower the windy, I'll wauken ye."

There was a freshness about the method suggested for "steering" him which appealed to Geordie's imagination.

"A' richt," he cried, as he started down the brae for home, "I'll leave't t' you. But see and dinna sleep ower lang yersel'."

Between three and four o'clock in the morning Rob Carment stole down the Manse stairs in his stocking soles. He put his boots on in the coach-house where his fishing-tackle and Janet McCormick's big bundle of sandwiches had been carefully bestowed the night before.

The day was just beginning to dawn as the young sportsman walked briskly across the turnip-field that lay between the Manse and Widow McAllum's cot-

tage. The ground was wet with the heavy dew that had fallen over night, and a rich earthy smell filled the air. Over Ben Vrachie the soft light fell like a mantle dropped from the skies; and, as the sun slowly mounted higher and higher, the path across the moor that led to Loch Vallachan began to shine through the heather like a silver thread. A less responsive heart than Rob Carment's would have risen to greet the sweet, still beauty of that early May morning.

When he reached the widow's cottage, Rob was in high spirits. The sharp walk sent the blood tingling through his veins, and stirred him into that delicious feeling of health and buoyancy which is known to early youth alone. If Geordie McCallum could have foreseen the effect of a morning walk upon his friend, he would have refused consent to the plan for "steering" him out of his sleep which had been agreed upon between them.

The reel lay on the ground beside the door-stone, and the line stretched up the wall and disappeared through a chink in the window of the front garret. It twitched and quivered like a living thing every time the sleeper moved in his bed. Rob watched it for a moment, and a smile began to gather about his lips.

"I'll steer him," he chuckled, as he picked the reel up and began to wind the line steadily in. When he had reeled up about two yards, the strain on the reel made it hard work to keep the handle in his grip. But Rob tightened his hold and gave three or four turns

more. The line creaked and whistled as if it would break.

"If I gie't another twist it'll snap." The words were hardly out of his mouth when there was a sudden slackening, and a heavy thud on the garret floor. Rob began to wind in again, but before he could put any strain on the line there was another noise above and a second slackening. The position of things grew clear to his mind. Geordie was hopping on one foot from his bed to the window. Just as Rob was getting the line tight once more, the window rose with a creaking which showed that it had been lifted in some haste. A white object appeared beyond the edge of the sill. As the winding continued, the object gradually lengthened out, until the larger half of Geordie McCallum's right leg was jerking for mercy above the head of the jubilant torturer. By a kind of miraculous twist the sufferer succeeded in screwing his face to the edge of the window sill.

"Drop it, Rob!" he cried, "Ye're terin' my tae oot!"

"Are ye sure ye're wauken, Geordie?" the torturer calmly inquired.

"Let go, Robbie. I canna thole it langer."

There was a quiver in the voice which suggested tears, and Rob Carment dropped the reel.

"I'll tak' ye!" Geordie cried, when he had dressed and come outside to join his friend. "What garred ye pu' like that? Ye've ta'en the skin off my big tae, and I'll no be able t' tramp t' Loch Vallachan th' day."

In proof of his disablement he limped painfully along for a distance of about a hundred yards. But the

effect of the damage wrought upon his great toe was probably exaggerated for purposes of dramatic display. At any rate, the limping grew by degrees less obvious, and by the time they reached the peat road at the up end of the Glen there was hardly a sign of it left. Geordie was as easily roused to buoyant life as Rob himself by the influence of a sweet May morning. In the brisk four-mile walk across the moor the skinned toe was soon forgotten.

It was seven o'clock when the boys got to the top of Loch Vallachan.

"Eh, Robbie man, it's lookin' braw. We'll get them th' day," was Geordie's cheerful verdict, as he viewed the water.

"Ay, if the sun doesna come oot ower strong," his friend replied. Rob was too eager for talk. There was a flush of excitement in his cheeks, and, without wasting a moment of the precious morning hours, he began to get his rod ready. After he had taken his first cast his bright eyes flamed like candles when a trout rose to his fly almost as soon as it had touched the water.

For two hours the boys had it all their own way. The fish were biting gloriously, and the young sportsmen worked round the north end of the Loch with the patient industry of which born anglers alone are capable.

About nine o'clock the sun broke brightly down upon the water, and in the sudden glare the fish took fright. For more than half an hour nothing was heard but the regular swish of the lines, the occasional

creak of a reel, or the startled scream of a muir-fowl disturbed in its lonely haunts by two intruders of human shape. The trout had either disappeared, or declined to yield any longer to the temptation of the gray-spotted fly which had proved so deadly to many of their comrades.

"We'll gie them a rest, Geordie," Rob called out to his companion, who was up to his knees in the water, beyond the point of a small peninsula, about a hundred yards away.

"They're gi'en us a rest, at ony rate," was the rueful reply.

But when the sportsmen got together, and began to compare takes, they had no cause to be dissatisfied with their morning's work. Three dozen black trout lay in a heap on the heather. Many of them were only about a hand's length, but there were eight or ten which must have weighed quite half a pound each.

"We've frichted them th' day, Geordie lad, and efter we've had oor breakfast maybe they'll be takin' again."

Rob was in capital spirits. He opened out Janet McCormick's bundle of sandwiches, and, bidding his friend follow his lead, began to attack them with the voracity of a famished vulture.

"Crikey! the auld wife kens—" The end of the sentence was stifled in a semicircle of bread and ham.

"Is't no' gran', Geordie?" he continued thickly as his tongue began to get some liberty. "I'm aye wantin' to be awa' frae the Glen when I get up here. It's terrible quiet and dull-like whiles. And there maun be fine things t' see in the world, if we got the chance

t' be off. Thir's the big ships sailin' awa t' the Indies; thir's Africa and the lions an' tigers roarin' roond the hoose a' nicht; thir's Australi and the kangyroos and miskitties jumpin' about yer bed like linties; thir's Robinson Crusoe's Island, an' the niggers and coky-nuts; thir's—"

"*Thir's Wullie Kelman!*" Geordie screamed in the middle of his friend's rhapsody.

Rob's imaginings came to an abrupt end. With one bound he was on his feet, and in five seconds he had thrown the fish into his basket and was following Geordie at full pace up the hill.

The gamekeeper was running round the head of the Loch, not a quarter of a mile away, when the boys caught sight of him. He continued in pursuit for a few minutes after they had betaken themselves to flight. But the chase was hopeless. The light-footed fugitives could run for an hour without stopping, and the burly keeper was already spent. With a threatening shake of his fist in the direction of the retreating figures Kelman came to a halt.

As their pursuer had given in, the fugitives paused for breath on the crest of the hill.

"Will we gang doon and tell him the Laird gied us leave?" Geordie asked.

"Na, he'll no' believe 't. We'll gang hame by the Killiekrankie side. It's a lang road, but maybe we'll get a cast in the Girnaig afore the day's ower."

The boys shouldered their rods and baskets, and made their way down the western slopes of Ben Vrachie towards the peat road that would bring them

into the upper end of Glen Girnaig. The Laird's caution about the birds'-nests was forgotten. For two hours they loitered among the heather searching for traces of the grouse that would be clucking over the moor in six weeks' time. But when they came upon a wasps' byke in a clump of fir trees, about a mile from the point where they hoped to strike the road, time and Willie Kelman were both forgotten.

"We'll burn them oot, Geordie," and Rob threw an armful of dried twigs under the byke. In two minutes the flames had licked through the walls of the paper city with their hot tongues, and the angry and distracted inhabitants were buzzing about in search of the enemy who had destroyed their home. But the smoke dazed them, and the enemy had sufficient practice in the burning of bykes to know how to keep out of their owners' way.

The smoke was not all in favor of the incendiaries, however. If it saved them from being seen it hindered them from seeing as well. As Rob was carrying in another armful of twigs to throw on the fire, a strong hand gripped him by the collar of his coat.

"Ye young vagabonds, I've catched ye noo;" a gruff voice roared in his ear. "My fegs! I'll sort ye."

Rob Carment knew the strength of Willie Kelman's arm by previous experience, and suffered himself to be dragged out of the smoke without speaking a word.

"What hev yer got t' say fer yersel'? Ye're aye glib eneuch wi' the tongue," and the gamekeeper enforced his demand with a rough shake.

Rob looked round for his friend. In the first mo-

ment of fright Geordie had taken to his heels, but the instinct of loyalty drew him back again.

"Ye daurna put a finger on us, Wullie Kelman," was the astounding answer to the keeper's question.

"Daurna put a finger on ye?" the man fairly gasped in amazement. "Ye'll be let aff licht if there's a whole bone in yer bodies when I'm through wi' ye, my braw laddies."

The keeper was drawing out the butt end of his fishing-rod as he spoke. There was no possibility of mistaking the purpose for which it was intended. But before the threatened castigation could be carried into effect, Rob managed to free himself by a dexterous twist.

"Ye daurna touch us, keeper!" he cried. "The Laird gied us leave t' fish in Loch Vallachan th' day."

"The Laird gied ye leave! That's a bonny like story! And what fer did ye rin when ye seen me comin' if the Laird gied ye leave? And did the Laird bid ye tramp about the muir, herryin' the birds'-nests and settin' fire to the heather an' the trees? Ye'll no' come ower me wi' yer lees. I'll 'leave' ye—"

The keeper rushed at his escaped prisoner. Rob took to his heels. Circumstances, he could not but acknowledge to himself, seemed to make his statement incredible. The matter might be adjusted at some future time; but for the present it was wisest to escape. Geordie viewed the matter in a similar light, for when Rob pulled up after a sharp ten minutes' run he found that his friend was only about thirty

yards behind him, while Willie Kelman had again given up the chase.

"What are we t' dae next, Rob?"

"We can dae naething but gang hame," was the gloomy answer. "That wild stirk has gotten oor fish an' rods an' baskets. But we'll be upsides wi' him yet."

Geordie did not know what his friend's threat pointed to. But he derived some satisfaction from it all the same. He had unlimited faith in Rob's resources, and, as he trudged wearily homewards, busied himself with imagining some of the different ways in which they might get "upsides" with the keeper.

II.

BETWEEN five and six o'clock in the afternoon the boys struck the low road at the village of Aldgirmaig, about four miles from home. The excitement of the day was over. There was nothing to be feared from game-keepers now. The Queen's highway would take them to their own doors. But the walk from Loch Vallachan had tired them, and they made up their minds to have tea at the Inn.

The mistress of the roadside hostelry was one of Mr. Carment's most devoted admirers, and when she saw who her visitors were she bustled them into her cozy front parlor, and in her own motherly, talkative way, urged them to make themselves at home. There was little need of urging, for the sweet fresh smell of the scones and cheese which Mrs. Jamieson laid on the table while she was speaking, was the best evidence of homeliness and good-will that hungry boys could get.

"Mak' yer teas," the guidwife insisted. "It's only bread and water that ye're promised, but I'm gi'en ye jeely cheese, forbye. Ye'll be needin' something efter yer tramp. My certie! it's a mercy if ye're no' jiled, the baith o' ye. An' what wad the Minister say t' that?"

"Hoo div ye ken where we've been th' day, guid-wife?" Rob enquired anxiously.

"Hoo div I ken, laddie? Frae Wullie Kelman, to be sure! Is he no' in the back room this very meenit? An' it's weel for you he's at his second gill, or maybe ye wad catch't."

Rob looked at his companion. There was a distinct abatement of colour in Geordie's face. He had forgotten about the path through the Urrard planting. The gamekeeper, instead of being left miles behind on the muir, had got to Aldgirnaig long before Rob and himself.

"Never ye heed, though," the hospitable hostess continued, when she saw the look of dismay on the faces of her guests. "Leave't t' me. I'll no' tell him ye're here; an' when ye've made yer teas ye can slip awa' hame. Wullie'll no steer for anither oor yet."

With this kindly assurance Mrs. Jamieson left the boys to "mak' their teas" alone. Like every genuine Celtic hostess, she preferred to withdraw from the room when her guests were eating, so that no feeling of delicacy might restrain them from falling upon the viands provided to the full extent of the hungriest appetite among them.

While the tea was in progress, shouts of laughter from the back room smote upon the ears of the young sportsmen. Willie Kelman was evidently making merry with some of his cronies. Very probably the merriment was being indulged in at their expense. That, at least, was Rob Carment's conviction, and it

fired him with a new determination to be "upsides" with the keeper.

"Geordie," he whispered, "I hev it. We'll gar that stirk lauch on the ither side o' his mooth. Gang but the passage as quiet's ye can an' see if oor rods an' baskets are hingin' on the pegs ahint th' door. I'll keep speakin' for baith o' us, so's the auld wife winna come ben."

Geordie hardly liked the commission; but he never confessed to fear, and he was in the habit of obeying Rob without question. While his friend carried on an exaggerated imaginary conversation, he slipped noiselessly along the dark passage, in the direction of the back room where the keeper and his cronies were making merry over their third gill.

In less than a minute he was back in the parlor again with a flush in his cheeks and a curious down-cast look about his eyes.

"Are they no' there?" Rob asked in an excited whisper.

"Ay, they're there," and the shamefaced expression became more marked.

"What for did ye no' bring them ben?" was the astonished query.

"I couldna dae't, Robbie," Geordie stammered out in reply. "It's ower like thievin'."

"Thievin'! It's him's a thief, the girnin' tyke! Man, ye hevna the smeddum o' a bantam hen. Bide here an' I'll dae't mysel'."

Rob stole on tiptoe to the end of the long passage. As he was feeling in the darkness for the pegs behind

the back-room door there was a sudden lull in the conversation of the merry-makers within. He stood motionless, and afraid almost to breathe, lest the slightest sound should discover his presence to the enemy.

"Crikey!" he said to himself, it *does* feel a wee like thievin'."

But courage, and a more just view of the situation returned when the stillness was broken by a noisy burst of laughter, in which the keeper's voice could easily be distinguished as the leading bass. A moment or two later he was back in the front parlor again, with the rods and baskets and the three dozen trout which Willie Kelman had confiscated some hours before.

It seemed ungracious to slip away without thanking Mrs. Jamieson for her hospitality. Payment, of course, they knew she would not accept. It was one of the articles of her creed to entertain the Minister and everyone hailing from the Manse on every possible occasion. The kindness of the hostess made the fugitives feel how ill their action would look. But the exigencies of the situation made a breach of courtesy necessary; for, if Mrs. Jamieson came upon the scene, she would be certain to notice that her guests were carrying out with them more than they had brought in. Without debating the point at all, the boys seized their recovered possessions and stole away from the Inn as if they were carrying off the good wife's till. For a distance of about a hundred yards they kept themselves to a walking pace. But it was hard work, and they had barely turned the first corner when they took to their heels, as if by a simultane-

ous instinct, and ran as fast as they could go. For two miles they kept on without slackening their pace. But Geordie began to show signs of distress on the Killiecrankie brae and Rob pulled up.

"Tak' it easy," he called back to his companion, who was about fifty yards behind him. "Wullie Kelman's houghs 'll be gey weel greased if he catches us th' nicht."

The remainder of the journey was uneventful, and the sportsmen reached home about nine o'clock, thoroughly satisfied with their day's enjoyment, and only in time to save themselves from something more than a rebuke for being out too late at night.

The story of the gamekeeper's discomfiture got about, and for two days Rob Carment and Geordie McAllum were the heroes of the school playground. But, as Saturday evening drew in, the heroes began to see that the situation was getting serious. On Sabbath Willie Kelman was certain to be at the Kirk, and it would be a difficult thing to keep out of his way. Geordie solved the problem, in so far as he was himself concerned, with a sudden and sharp attack of toothache. His facial contortions, and the cries of pain to which he gave loud and frequent utterance, melted his mother's heart. She bade him keep to his bed till dinner-time, and went to the morning service by herself.

For Rob there was no such easy way of escape. Even if his friend's device had occurred to his imagination he would scarcely have put it into practice. Not that his uncle was ever likely to suspect him of

fraud. But it was just Mr. Carment's child-like ingenuousness which led his nephew to make it a point of honor that he would never take a mean advantage of him. Rob had his weak points, but even Janet McCormick allowed that he was "aye straicht wi' the Minister."

At the morning service Willie Kelman took his usual place in the middle of the fourth pew from the front. To the unquiet soul in the far corner of the Manse seat it seemed as if the keeper's stored-up wrath were flaming through his eyes. Rob tried to fix his gaze upon the Minister, but the effort was futile. Every other minute he felt his eyes drawn by an irresistible fascination towards the middle of the fourth pew. And each time that he looked he seemed to meet the keeper's gaze, and to feel less and less doubt as to the meaning which it was intended to convey. As the service drew to a close, Rob could not help thinking that Willie Kelman had grown bigger and more formidable-looking than he seemed to have been when he entered the Kirk. When he rose to his feet at the last prayer he appeared to tower over everybody, like Ben Vrachie among the craigs, and as the boy viewed him furtively through half-closed eyes his spirit sank.

If the Laird had been at the Kirk there might have been some hope of an explanation that would deliver him out of the keeper's hands. But one of the Laird's daughters had taken ill the day before, and the big box-pew in the middle of the front gallery was empty. When the benediction had been given and the congre-

gation began to disperse, Rob was still without any definite plan. There was some hope for him in the fact that the occupants of the Manse pew, according to immemorial custom, were the last to leave the Kirk. But the hope was short-lived, for it soon became evident that Willie Kelman was letting people pass him, and stolidly standing guard at the end of his pew. Rob got desperate. There was only one chance left. While the keeper was looking in another direction he slipped into the Session House through the door at the foot of the pulpit stairs. Unhappily, the outer door was locked and there was no way of making his escape, unless he risked going through the Vestry. But that road had been strictly forbidden him, and he did not entertain the idea of using it, after one desperate impulse had been conquered.

There was one hope still. He might escape by the window. But the project was a difficult one to carry into effect, because the window was of the old-fashioned diamond-paned sort. A slip about two feet square, in the centre of it, was the only means of egress which it presented. But Rob had some skill in squeezing himself through small openings, and without wasting a moment he sprang, with the help of a form, upon the narrow sill. It was easy enough to get his head and shoulders through, but as there was nothing on the other side to lay hold of a complete exit could only be accomplished at the risk of falling head-first to the ground. He tried to get his hands down on the outer sill, but could not accomplish it without leaning more of his weight on the window-

panes than they would be likely to bear. Circumstances make one resourceful, however; and, after screwing himself round, he managed to get hold of the spouting above his head. Fortunately it was well fixed, and, although it yielded a little, Rob felt that he was safe and could draw himself through without much difficulty. He was beginning to breathe freely again, in the sweet consciousness of liberty, when two strong hands gripped him by the shoulders.

"I'll gie ye a hand," and the familiar rough voice sounded like a death-knell in the culprit's ears. "Ah, ha, my laddie, I've catcht ye noo, for so clever's ye are. What hev ye 't say for stealin' frae the Inn at Aldgirmaig?"

Rob looked into the gamekeeper's face. It took him a moment or two to recover from the dismay with which this sudden and unlooked-for capture had overwhelmed him.

"I didna steal onything," he answered, in his dour-est tones. "It's yersel' 's the thief. The Laird gi'en us leave t' fish in Loch Vallachan on the Queen's Birthday."

Instead of the outburst of anger which he expected, Rob Carment saw the gamekeeper's face relax slowly into a smile.

"Weel, weel, laddie," he said good-humoredly, "we'll say nae mair aboot it. I seen the Laird yesterday and he telt me that what ye said was true. But ye shouldna run awa sae frichtened like when ye've gotten leave t' fish. It was that made me sure ye were poachin'. Ye got yer troot efter a', though, an' gey

clever managed it was too, my certie! I'll no be hearin' the end o't this mony a day."

"But I gied ye a sair fricht," the gamekeeper continued, "an' I'll mak up for't on Setterday if Geordie and yersel' 'll come wi' me for a day's fishin' on The Broom."

"The Broom!" exclaimed Rob. "Will ye tak's wi' ye there?"

"Ay, will I, if ye'll come."

"Fegs!!!"

Rob found time to call in on Geordie as he was passing the widow's cottage on his way home. Mrs. McAllum never saw her son get over a violent attack of toothache so quickly.

THE CANDLE ON THE BRAE

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I.

ELSIE McIntosh lived in a little house that stood by itself at the top of the Kirkmichael brae, about a quarter of a mile beyond the Lettoch march-dyke. The house was easily found: it lay back from the road a hundred yards or so, directly opposite the first of the snow posts, and within a few paces of the point where the fall towards Dalnagarran begins. Yet a stranger might easily have passed on without noticing that there was a house so close to him. A high, straggling honeysuckle hedge hid from view everything but the grass that grew on the turf ridging of the thatched roof, and a few inches of the bottomless barrel that did duty as a chimney-pot. Anyone who took the trouble to peep under the arch of honeysuckle that hung over Elsie's gate would have understood why her dwelling was pleasantly described in the Glen as "the halfin' hoose." It had a distinctly half-built look about it. There was only one chimney and one window, and the door was as near to the edge of the end wall, opposite the fire-place, as it could conveniently get. One could almost have believed that the house was designed on more liberal dimensions; economy or stress of weather or a sudden freak of the builder

middle of "Robinson Crusoe" at the time, and was hesitating between the attraction of a pirate's life and the glory of the kind of warfare described in his last New Year's present—"The Scottish Chiefs." But the farther aims of life were soon chased out of mind by the interest with which he followed Elsie's hospitable preparations when her prayers were ended. The fresh barley-scones, with the butter and cheese that one of the Lettoch lasses had brought over only that afternoon, and a dish of tea which would have satisfied the demands of Jock Lamont himself—and he was the thirstiest lad in the Glen—offered an enticement that the most exacting appetite could not despise. Rob made old Elsie's heart glad by the vigor of his assault upon the simple viands with which she had loaded her little table. When the dishes were all neatly replaced in the cupboard at the left-hand side of the fireplace, the knives and spoons put back into the drawer of the table, and the spotless white cloth folded away in the top long drawer of the mahogany chest, he rose to take his leave. But curiosity delayed him for a moment or two. Elsie had reached out from among the pots and pans in the other cupboard a large, stoutly built stable-lantern, of a pattern that was not to be seen anywhere else in the Glen. She fixed a fresh tallow candle in the holder of the lantern, and, after lighting it and closing securely the thick glass door, waited till her guest had gathered up his fishing materials, and then accompanied him to the gate under the arch of honeysuckle. Rob knew that Elsie had not brought the lantern out simply to light his steps.

She bade him good-by, and immediately began to tie the lantern to a piece of thick hempen rope that hung from the bough in the middle of the honeysuckle arch above the gate.

Rob Carment would have liked to hear the story of the Candle on the Brae from Elsie's own lips; but there was something that restrained him from asking any questions. He could not have explained his diffidence. Some who were older and more experienced than he felt the same sort of difficulty when they looked into Elsie McIntosh's face. It was a sweet old face, and a single word would sometimes bring a light across it that was beautiful—to such as had eyes to see—with the beauty of the Lord. But there was about it, too, a certain suggestion of dignity and distance which tied the questioner's tongue.

Elsie McIntosh's story scarcely needed retelling. It was known at every fireside in the Glen. Nearly sixty years before she had lived in that same "halfin' hoose" with her mother, the widow of one of the Duke's gamekeepers. They eked out the father's hoardings, and the little pension allowed them from the Castle, with the spinning of the wandered wool that they were able to pick up among the heather on the muir. Elsie was a strapping, handsome lass in those distant times, and the rafters of the "halfin' hoose" shook often to the laughter and the daffing of the lads who sought the favor of her maiden smile. It was Peter Dewar, the under-keeper on the Dalnagarran deer-forest, who won her promise true, and through six good months at Kirk and market he held

his head the higher for it. There was no one left in the Glen who remembered Peter Dewar, or could speak of the time when he and Elsie McIntosh stepped the heather together as plighted lad and lass. But the story of the end that came upon the keeper's courtship had been whispered in the glow of the winter peats for nearly sixty years; and there was more than one who had seen the glimmer of the death-light that flitted unquietly about the muir in front of the "halfin' hoose," every Martinmas night.

On the morning of a day in the far-back years, Peter stood in the gate of the "halfin' hoose." He was on his way to Moulin market, with a plaid about his breast and shoulders and a stout shepherd's crook in his hand.

"Whatna fairin' will I bring ye?" he asked of the girl who leaned against the gate-post, and searched his face with the tenderness and the anxiety of maiden love in her eyes.

"I'm no' seekin' a fairin', Peter lad," she answered. "But ye'll no' be vexed if I ask ye somethin'?"

"No, lass"—and the keeper laughed in the joy of the love that filled his heart—"I'll no' be vexed at anythin' ye say t' me. What is it ails ye?"

"Be careful wi' the drink, Peter lad, and dinna be ower late gettin' hame. The snaw'll be comin' doon gey heavy th' day, I'm thinkin', and it'll no' be easy t' keep the road efter it begins t' get dark."


"Dinna be vexin' yersel' my bonnie doo," the keeper replied. "I'll promise no' t' put a drop o' drink t' my lips th' day; and if ye'll be watchin' at the window

ye'll see me at the gate again wi' the chap o' six o'clock as sure's deith."

Other speech there was between them, too, which is not for the telling; for, when Peter Dewar said his last good-by, there was a heartsome flame in the cheeks, and a tender light in the eyes of his love-lass that no one ever got sight of again.

In the early afternoon the snow began to fall; at first only in light, intermittent showers, but, as the day wore out, in steadily thickening sheets. Long before night had settled down the last land-mark between the road and the muir had been blotted out. While the light lasted, custom and instinct might have carried a practiced mountaineer like Peter Dewar safely across from the Moulin road to the point where the snow-posts began, at the fall towards Dalnagarran. But, after dark, only the courage of the foolhardy or the ignorant would venture such a perilous journey.

When the "wag-at-the-wa'" struck six o'clock there was no sight of Peter, although the snowstorm showed no sign of abating, and the darkness was midnight deep. Elsie began to be restless and anxious. She lit the candle in the big stable-lantern that her father used to carry in his rounds among the traps and snares, and hung it out above the gate. If Peter got to the top of the rise behind the Lettoch, he might see, across the mile-long flat, the light at the other edge of the brae that would guide him to the house of his love. But the hours went one by one, and still the keeper did not come. When the "wag-at-the-wa'" began to rumble the strokes of nine, Elsie made up her mind



that her lover was storm-stayed at his sister's half-way house in Kinnaird. She took the lantern down from the bough of honeysuckle above the gate and put out the candle.

Through the night the wind rose, and began to drive the snow in sharp blatters against the garden fence, and as high even as the thatch on the roof. Elsie tried to feel thankful, in the comfort of the great four-poster, that her lover was safely housed from the storm at his sister's in Kinnaird. But there was a fear in her heart that would not be put down. It grew with the slow lengthening of the night, and, in one wind-lull, when she seemed to hear from the muir a cry like the terrible death-howl of a shepherd's dog, there was a coldness in its grip upon her heart that was never to pass away.

At the mouth of day Elsie and her mother made their way out through three feet of soft drifted snow to the garden-gate. Some instinct drew them on. Keeping close together, for the fear in their hearts that they dared not put into words, they reached the road and began to pick their steps warily in the direction of Kinnaird. The miserable uncertainty that made them fear to look one another in the face was soon woefully dispelled. Less than a quarter of a mile from the first snow-post they came upon Peter Dewar lying out in the heather, about a dozen yards away from the road. He had lost his way, and had fallen down in the deathly snow-sleep almost within call of the house where his love-lass was heaping peats on the fire to make him cheer.

That was Elsie McIntosh's story. The brightness of a maiden's love-dream had been suddenly quenched in her life—for the lad that was stepping bravely towards her across the snow need not have died. If she had left the candle on the brae, Peter Dewar would have come home to her that bitter Martinmas night.

Nearly sixty years had gone since the young game-keeper came by his lonely death on Kirkmichael muir, because there was no light in the gate of the "halfin' hoose." But no other traveler on the muir had ever missed, in all those years, the flicker of the Candle on the Brae. For that was the way of Elsie's gentle atonement for a thing that she counted against herself as an inexcusable neglect. She had hung the lantern out under the arch of honeysuckle, with a candle in it that would burn for over three hours, every late autumn and winter night for more than half a century. And many a wandered foot had been guided by the Candle on the Brae to the shelter and the comfort of the "halfin' hoose."

The story of Elsie McIntosh's love and loss might have passed out of memory—as old stories are apt to do—if it had not been for the Candle on the Brae. In the dim halo of the flickering light, under the arch of honeysuckle, it lived through three generations. But there was nothing else, in Rob Carment's time, to recall the days that were dead. Elsie was old and frail and bowed; in her shrunken form and withered face there was little to suggest the strapping lass who had stepped the heather, more than half a century back, as

the trysted love of Peter Dewar. She met each winter, as it came round, with diminished bravery of body; but there were two or three in Glen Brearachan who had skill in the lore of God, and to them it seemed as if the breath of the lonely cottager's spirit grew sweeter year by year.

Elsie McIntosh was linked, in the thoughts of the youngest generation in the Glen, with the Sabbath Day and the worship at the Kirk. She was seldom to be seen through the working days of the week more than a few yards away from her own house-door. The mail-cart brought her all the things she needed for the plenishing of her modest cupboards; it was only on the Sabbath and the yearly Fast Day that she took the road to Moulin. Through the spring and summer months she scarcely ever missed a morning service at the Kirk. In the bitter midwinter time, when the nip of the frost was keen, or the snow made traveling difficult for her old, uncertain feet, she found the three-mile walk too much for her, and had to stay at home. But with the first touch of the spring's breath Elsie got out her Sabbath habit again, and resumed her weekly journeys to the House of God.

The morning service began at twelve o'clock, and old Elsie allowed herself two hours for the peaceful Sabbath progress. She had three resting-places on the way—one at the angle of the Moulin and Kirkmichael roads, another at the cairn of stones above Auchlat, and a third on the bank beside Balnakeilly gate. She was always dressed for the Kirk in a style of her own, which seemed to be inflexible. Whatever fash-

ion might prescribe for others, Elsie McIntosh admitted no change upon the mode of her Sabbath attire. There were some who went the length of whispering that she had worn exactly the same clothes through all the years that they could bring to mind. Her bonnet was of stiff calico, stretched on thin half hoops of whale bone, and tied below the chin by its two broad strings in a large double bow. It looked like a kind of simple glorification of the "mutch" which its wearer used in the house, and like a hesitating prophecy of the sun-bonnet that was to add to the grace of a later day. Elsie's dress was as unpretentious as the sternest Puritan could have wished it to be. She was clad in a close-fitting bodice of black alpaca, with a skirt to match—a little shorter, perhaps, than current fashion dictated even in Glen Brearachan, where custom in the matter of dress was never allowed to become tyrannical. But the shortness of Elsie's skirt did not indicate any headstrong individualism. Some of the older women spoke of a time when the white rim of stocking, above the tops of her elastic-side boots, could not have been noticed. But, in the wear and tear of a lifetime of years, the best alpaca in the world will shrink an inch or two. In warm weather a light cashmere shawl, yellowed a little by age, and coarsened by the frequent washings to which it had been subjected, hung about old Elsie's shoulders, and was fastened at her throat with the large cairngorm brooch that had once been the pride of her father's gala dress, when he marched with the Duke's retainers on the day of the Athole Gathering. In the early autumn, when

the frost began to bite, the lighter wrap was replaced by a comfortable shawl, which Elsie had knitted out of homespun wool with her own needles. Her protection against sun or rain was secured by the bulky umbrella which she invariably carried in her left hand. The umbrella was fashioned in a material that might, probably, have been described in other and distant days as black alpaca; but it had grown green with age, and although the whale-bone ribs were tied together at the tips with a stout leather boot-lace, they bulged the covering out until, in the middle of the handle, it must have measured quite a foot in circumference.

But it was to the contents of her right hand that Elsie McIntosh owed the chief distinction of her Kirk-going outfit. She held between the fingers and thumb an extraordinary assortment of Sabbath requisites. First, there was her large-type Gaelic Bible; on the top, a small white handkerchief folded neatly in a triangle, and suggesting ornament rather than use; above the handkerchief, the neighbor of the black cotton glove which covered her left hand with needless generosity; and over all, under the warm pressure of her thumb, a sprig of southern-wood to freshen her faculties with its nipping fragrance if the day were close, or the sermon more than usually exacting. No one had ever seen Elsie come to the Kirk with a lighter load; and there was never any addition to the number of necessities which she carried in her long thin hand.

The green Yule of '69 brought Elsie McIntosh to the Kirk-gates for the last time. She had been

failing gently all through the autumn and early winter, and, on the morning of the last Sabbath of the year, it was whispered among the worshipers that her patient vigil was nearing its close. The Minister went up to the "halfin' hoose" in the afternoon to bid old Elsie a last God-speed. But it did not seem to him as if the sands of life were so nearly run out for her as he had been given to believe. After the evening service, he sent Rob to find out if the will of God had been made clear.

Rob took Geordie McAllum with him to keep him in heart. There was a suggestion of death in the mission assigned to him that made companionship imperative; for the bravest boy will shrink at the thought that he is drawing near to the cold, keen edge of the silent Harvester's scythe. Through the sharp December air the comrades pressed briskly on till they reached the top of Kirkmichael brae behind the Lettoch farm. Nearly a mile away they could see the light in the lantern above old Elsie's gate. The sight of it made them instinctively lessen their pace. A little frightened, but each ashamed to betray his fear to the other, the boys stepped out half of the mile-long flat that lay between the two edges of the brae. The strain of the silence that tied their tongues was more eloquent than any words could have been, and when they had got within five or six hundred yards of the "halfin' hoose," their assumed courage melted suddenly away. The candle on the brae, whose light had every minute been growing clearer and homelier-looking, went out. Darkness had never seemed to

them so still and deathly and deep as it did in that moment, and they came to instant fear-stricken halt.

"Geordie," and Rob's voice shook with the dread of night and death, "it's terrible quiet-like. Are ye no' frichted?"

In almost any other situation that could be conceived, Geordie McAllum would have repelled the insinuation in his companion's question with impetuous scorn. But the miserable ingenuousness which the terror of unseen powers inspires drew from his lips an immediate, unhesitating confession. Only, as he remembered afterwards with some complacency, he was far-sighted enough to give his answer in a form that would protect him from future reproach.

"Ay," was Geordie's candid and careful reply, "I'm as frichted as yersel'. Will we no' better turn and gang hame?"

Rob Carment accepted his companion's suggestion without protest or criticism, and that was not the way in which he usually dealt with Geordie's proposals. Silently and with softened tread, as if there were outrage in the sound of their foot-falls on the silence that made court for the King of Terrors, the boys stole homewards. At the Manse gate they paused for a moment or two to hold a whispered consultation. Now that they could think the matter out with some calmness, it seemed a wholly insufficient cause that had moved them to turn back, without inquiring at the "halfin' hoose" how it fared with Elsie McIntosh. At the time the instinct which bade them withdraw was irresistible; but, in sight of the Minister's study

window, it seemed to lose something of its urgency. There were some things, however, which never needed to be explained to Mr. Carment. Rob began his story in a halting, shamefaced way, but he had only spoken a few words when the Minister understood. There was no rebuke from his lips when he found that the boys had come back without taking a message from the "halfin' hoose." He said nothing at all for quite a minute, and in the silence his nephew found courage to put into words the question which had been knocking for utterance at his heart for nearly an hour.

"Div ye think that Elsie died when the candle went oot, Uncle Wullie?"

Still there was no immediate response from Mr. Carment. But his face wore the look that comes only now and then, even to a good man—in those rare moments when he sees the things invisible to common sight, as if there were nothing else in the universe to see. When the minister did open his lips it was to quote, as his hearers had never heard them spoken before, the beautiful, haunting words of the Book . . . "they need no *Candle*, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light."

STICKIT SAUNIE

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I.

THE CLASHIN' OF THE MANSE GATE.

It wasn't an easy thing to surprise John Sturrock. He got the name of being the doucest and least demonstrative man in Glen Brearachan. But there was surprise, and even some anxiety, in the Souter's face as he dropped his buckets on the pump-stone, and glanced sharply round towards the Manse gate. His sight was beginning to fail. He could see that a woman was coming across the green with quick, angry steps; but it was not till she had reached within a few paces of the spot where he was standing that he was able to make her out.

"Is that yersel', Tibbie Cameron?" he asked in a doubting tone.

"Deed is it, John Sturrock, and what for no'?"

The Souter did not like the answer to his question. It was spoken in a high, trembling voice that hinted trouble.

"What made ye clash the Manse gate that wy?"

"Why should I no' clash it? I micht as weel mak' sure that it was shut th' day. It's the last time I'll ever finger the sneck o' it."

Tibbie Cameron spoke with a passion that took the Souter's breath away.

"Hoots, havers, woman!" was the astonished exclamation with which he greeted her angry outburst. "What's gane wrang betwixt yersel' and the Minister? Him and you's been chief this thirty year and better, and ye're surely no' gaun to fa' oot noo?"

"Maybe we hae been chief this thirty year and better; and maybe I've gane to the Manse on Monday mornin' to mak' the oatcakes that he likes for his tea, ever since the guidman was taen awa' seventeen years come Martinmas; and maybe Mistress Janet'll no' fin' the washin' sae easy to put through when she has to look to the bakin' as weel. My certie! Janet'll ken what wark is noo. But she may wrastle wi' the gridiron like a naked heathen and she'll never learn to mak' the oatcakes. The Minister telt me himsel' that there wasna anither wife in the parish could crisp the cakes like me. It'll mak' a differ to her an' him too, I'm thinkin', when Tibbie Cameron bides at her ain ingle on Monday morn. But there's some words that's hard to thole, and Maister Carment has spoken them to me this day."

"I'm astonished to hear ye, Tibbie Cameron," the Souter answered, with a distinct note of reproach in his voice. "I'm astonished to hear ye. A'body kens that if ye gang into the Minister's study on a Saturday mornin', when he's throwin' wi' his sermon, ye maun e'en tak' pot-luck in the matter o' menners. Div ye no mind hoo Peter Scott was served when he gaed to speak about the kirsenin' o' the eleventh? The

Minister snappit at him, like a collie in the distemper, and tellt him that a man o' his experience in kirsenin's should ha' kent better than come to the Manse at ten o'clock of a Saturday mornin'.

"But Maister Carment is no aye that thrawn that he canna stop to speak," the Souter continued, with the air of a man who was in the habit of being just to everybody. "I've found him very ceevil on Saturday whiles. I'm thinkin' it depends on the pairt o' the sermon he's wrastlin' wi'. If ye get him when he's breakin' groond at the start he'll no gie ye a word. He's like a body pushin' up a stey brae that daurna waste a breath till he wins to the top. Gin ye catch him when he's fair in the middle he'll be ceevil enough. He's gotten through the warst o' the wrastle, and is takin' a quiet look roond, enjoyin' the view, so to speak, afore he begins to haud doon the brae on the hame side. But if ye come at him when he's gettin' near the feenish, he's that rampageous he's like to run ower ye in his haste to be aff the hill and oot o' the mist. The sermon 'll be a bit behind this week, I'm thinkin', and ye maun e'en mak' some allooance, Tibbie."

"Ye div'na think, John Sturrock, that I'm sich a feckless cratur as to let menners put me about? Na, na, Maister Carment was ceevil enough. But I'll cairry the mark o' the clout he gied me th' day to the Kirk-yard."

The Souter guessed by a kind of intuition what the trouble was about. There was one subject upon which quiet Tibbie Cameron could be eloquent. It

was more than probable that she could get angry over the same subject as well.

"Was it about the laddie ye were speakin' wi' the Minister?"

"Ay, it was about Saunie that I gaed to see him th' day. Ye ken what I have aye meant to do by the callant. The last word the guidman said to me was to put Saunie to the college and mak' a minister o' him. For seventeen years I've been toilin' and moilin' to get the money thegither. Fouk thinks I wadna need to wark so hard if I wasna ower fond o' the siller. But I've aye gi'en my mite to the plate on Sabbath, and, although I say it that shouldna, there's mony a puir body in Glen Brearachan that's fingered Tibbie Cameron's bawbee. I wasna forgettin' ithers when I wroucht for Saunie. If I've gotten the money to put him to the college, guid kens it wasna easy gaithered. And after a' the lang years o' savin' and scrapin' to be tellt that I should put the callant to his faither's loom——"

Tibbie's voice gave out, and the sentence was left unfinished.

"The Minister has naething against the laddie, I'm very sure," the Souter insisted in a kindly way. "I've heard him say mysel' that Saunie wasna withoot a glimmerin' o' the grace o' God, young as he is."

"Maister Carment doesna a'thegither deny but what there may be the beginnin' o' a gracious experience about the callant. He lichted on him ae day, at the denner hour, ahint the school-dyke haudin' kirk wi' some o' the bairns. Saunie was busy reelin'

aff the sermon the Minister preached aboot Melcheezedeek on the Sabbath was eicht days afore. Since syne, Maister Carment has aye made an unco' fash wi' him at the catechising. It's no' grace that he refuses to Saunie a'thegither. It's the gifts that he says is wantin'. But surely me that's watched him day and nicht since I happit him in his swaddlin's should ken his pairts better than onybody else! Saunie has a wonderfu' wy wi' him, John. Whiles, when he's readin' his book, he tak's a look that mak's me kind o' feared. Ae nicht I watched him unbekent as he sat in his chair between the loom and the ingle. He lookit as if he didna belong to this wicked warld ava. His eyes were shinin' wi' the glory o' heaven. The smile o' an angel was lyin' on his face, and his lips were movin' and tremblin' as if he was speakin' to ane that my blin' eyes didna' behold. I couldna help thinkin' that the Lord was speakin' t' him as He spak t' Samuel in Shiloh. I fair held my breath, and expeckit every meenit to hear him cry oot, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'

"But I ken brawly whar the Minister gets his notions aboot Saunie frae," Tibbie continued in a more aggressive tone. "It's the Dominie that's been cryin' him doon. The Dominie canna understan' a lad like Saunie. I'll no' deny he's a decent body in his wy, but he's aye lookin' for gifts and doesna set store enough by the grace o' God. For my pairt I believe what the Buik says, that gin ye seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness all other things shall be added unto you. Saunie has chosen the better

pairt. He has gotten the best o' a' gifts, and I'll no believe but what the Lord'll tak' tent o' him in the day o' battle. Goliath had gifts to spare wi' his sword, and his greaves, and his spear like a weaver's beam. But the herd laddie frae the braes o' Bethlehem, that went oot against him in the name o' the Lord Jehovah, brought him to the groond. The airm o' the Lord is not shortened. He's callin' my bonnie laddie to follow Him, and for a' that Maister Carment likes to say, Saunie'll gang wi' Him to the battle."

There was a heroic look on Tibbie Cameron's face. Her voice rose as she was speaking, and the last words rang with the triumph of a faith that nothing could break.

The Souter was touched. But in his secret soul he believed that the Minister was right in the advice he had given. For a moment he scarcely knew what answer to make.

"Weel, weel, Tibbie," he began, in a softened tone, "it's ae thing to be a mither and it's anither thing to be a minister. It's like enough that Maister Carment and you winna see thegither aboot Saunie, but ye needna' fa' oot ower it for a' that. Naebody kens better than you that the Minister wadna dae onything he didna think was richt. Gin ye tak' time to think it ower ye'll see things in anither licht. I wadna wonder but Monday'll see the cakes on the Manse gridiron again. And I'm thinkin' it's no' strange hands that'll bake them."

"Maybe ye're richt, John," Tibbie rejoined in a

voice that betrayed a struggle towards surrender, "but my mind's that set on Saunie gaun' to the college that I canna bear to hear a word against it."

The possibility of oatcakes being baked in the Manse kitchen by other hands was too much for Tibbie Cameron's imagination. She bade the Souter a good day in something like her natural voice, and began to cross the other half of the green that lay between her and the road.

John Sturrock hastened home. He remembered that the good-wife would be impatient at being kept so long from her day's work. But that did not trouble him much. The tasty story he had to tell would turn the edge of his wife's ire.

But the story was less complete than John Sturrock imagined it to be. If he had seen what took place after he had turned into the lane that led to his own cottage, he would have got a second surprise that morning.

Tibbie Cameron turned when she reached the road at the corner of the Kirk-yard and watched the Souter till he was out of sight. After what seemed a moment's hesitation, she sped back across the green to the Manse gate. Lifting the sneck she first opened the gate, and then immediately closed it softly again. It was a simple thing to do. But the Angel of gentle deeds would see an atonement in it.

As she turned homewards Tibbie's face wore the look that all the parish knew; and the Minister was sure of his cakes on Monday.

II.

TIBBIE HAUDS BY HIM STILL

"Hev, Minister, gie's a sermon, will ye? Tell's about Melcheezedeek! Ye hevna forgot the heids, hev ye?"

This was the greeting with which a half-dozen boys who were idling about the Brig saluted the appearance of a man who had just come out of the cottage at the angle of the cross-roads. The object of their mirth hesitated for a while. He held the knob of the half-closed door in his hand and seemed in doubt as to whether he should brave his tormentors or retreat. A look of settled weariness lay upon his face. The clothes he wore had a ministerial character about them still, but they had passed into a shabbiness from which no skill could ever redeem them.

After some moments of hesitation the jaded-looking man went inside again and closed the door behind him. He was unequal to the ordeal through which he would have to pass.

"Puir cratur! has it come to this?" Janet M'Cormick exclaimed indignantly, as she broke off her conversation with Marget McIntyre at the bake-house door and hastened towards the Brig.

"Think shame on yersel's, ye gude-for-naethin'

brats!" she cried. "Can ye no find somethin' better to do than worrit a puir body that wadna hairm a docken?"

The boys slunk sheepishly away. Janet had an authority in the Glen that no one dreamed of disputing. Next to the Minister himself, his house-keeper was the person whom the young people feared and respected most.

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Saunie took his departure for Aberdeen towards the end of October. Tibbie went with him to the Inn-yard to see him away. There was a look of restrained pride on her face as she watched him take his seat beside the driver on the mail coach. Saunie did not appear to be elated himself. He tried to keep the tears back, but the effort was unsuccessful. The last words he addressed to Tibbie revealed the state of his mind.

"Mither," he cried, in a piteous way, "will ye no' let me bide at hame? I'm no' seekin' to be a minister."

The coach moved off, and Saunie's question received no answer. Alec Campbell, who got the last sight of him as the mail turned into the high road at the corner of the school-dyke, reported on the playground that "Saunie was ta'en awa' greetin' like a bairn."

The Glen heard very little about Saunie's progress at college. He came home each summer between the sessions, and his mother grew prouder of him every year. She always wore her best black gown on the

first Sabbath after his return. That was one of the ways in which she showed her appreciation of the dignity conferred upon her by the fact that she had a son at college.

There were no signs of pride about Saunie himself. He was always the same simple-looking lad, whose Sabbath clothes seemed to sit upon him somewhat uneasily.

The proudest day in Tibbie's life was when she went to Dunkeld to see Saunie getting his license. The Presbytery did not question him very closely. Mr. Carment spoke some kindly words about Tibbie; and Saunie came out from the meeting—a minister.

When he appeared in the Kirk next Sabbath there was some stir. His former companions regarded him with a new feeling of awe, as they watched him cross the Kirk-yard in the frock coat and silk hat that betokened his holy calling. Tibbie had dressed his tie with her own hands, and, if the truth were known, had fallen upon his neck in a great outburst of maternal pride, as she put it on for the first time. The triumph of the day was complete when the Dominie remarked, in his pawky way, "*Maister* Saunie is lookin' real well."

About a month after he had taken license, Mr. Carment asked Saunie to preach in the Kirk. It was a fine summer morning, and everybody was there. Tibbie sat in her pew below the pulpit with a look of conscious pride upon her face, for which nobody thought of blaming her. The Minister shifted nervously about in the Manse seat after he had con-

ducted Saunie to the pulpit. He had his own ideas about the preacher, and they did not give him much comfort. There is little to be said. Saunie's sermon is spoken of to this day in the Glen. The subject of his discourse was Melchizedek, the Prince of Salem. But what the truths were which he endeavored to convey to his hearers nobody could make out. He had several "heads," which seemed to come into collision with each other in every second sentence. Nervousness could not completely explain the preacher's failure. A congregation accustomed to sound and careful preaching was not to be deceived. Before the first ten minutes were over the Glen knew that Saunie had nothing to say. When he came to the "word in conclusion" the congregation gave a sigh of relief. There was a good deal of talk among the younger people on their way home from Kirk. The older folk said little. In an unconscious way they felt the pathos of the day's experience. Saunie's sermon was the first act in a piteous tragedy.

The one hearer whom the preacher succeeded in delighting was his mother. Saunie's sermon was the best that Tibbie had ever heard. She could not understand why Mr. Carment spoke so coldly. From him at least she expected some words of warm appreciation. But the Minister did not speak them; and an estrangement began that day between Tibbie and himself which lasted for nearly ten years. She went no more to the Manse on Monday, and Mr. Carment had to be content with such oatcakes as Janet McCormick was able to bake.

For four years Saunie was only seen in the Glen on a Sunday now and again. There was no word of his ever being called to a Kirk. But he managed to get preaching engagements fairly often; and he had been "given a hearing" in almost every vacant charge in the country.

In the fifth year of his probation as a minister, Saunie came home to his mother's cottage. The Glen thought for a while that he was taking a holiday. But the weeks grew into months, and there was no sign of his going away. It began to be whispered that Saunie was "stickit." He had given up his last hope of ever being called to a Kirk. Saunie wanted to try something else, as preaching had failed him. But Tibbie stood in the way. She had made a minister of him against his inclination, and she would keep him a minister as long as he lived. He had not strength of will enough to oppose his mother's wishes, and, as there was nothing for him to do, he soon began to lose both health and heart. For five weary years he sat in the old chair between the loom and the ingle. He did not care to go out much, as the boys had got into the way of jeering at him.

Sometimes Saunie would persuade his mother to let him take the bundles of clothes, which she had dressed, back to their owners. Tibbie would only give a reluctant consent when the evening was dark and he was not likely to be observed. Even on these occasions, she insisted on his wearing frock coat and white tie. She would never hear of his laying the symbols of his holy calling aside.

Saunie's education had done enough for him to make him feel that his position was a miserable one. But he seemed to be quite without resource of any kind. Dejection settled deep upon his soul, and he made no effort to escape from it. "Stickit" Saunie's weary face moved many a kindly heart to tears.

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Before taking the brae, Janet McCormick knocked at Tibbie Cameron's door. The two women had seen little of each other for nearly ten years. But Janet's heart was touched by the scene she had witnessed on the Brig in the morning; and she made up her mind to call in at the cottage, as she used to do before the Minister and Tibbie became estranged.

Tibbie looked surprised when she opened the door and saw who her visitor was. But there was something in her old friend's face that made stiffness impossible.

"Come in, Janet," she said in a low but kindly tone; "it's lang since ye've been atour my door stane."

"It's ower lang, Tibbie. It's ower lang, woman. I was just thinkin' the day it wesna like the thing for auld freends like you and me to be haudin' aff frae each other."

"I'm real gled to see you, Janet. I'm no' goin' oot muckle mysel' noo, as I didna care to be leavin' Saunie in the hoose his lane. And it does get a bit lonesome whiles."

Tibbie's voice trembled a little, but it was evident that she was making a strong effort to appear calm.

"An' hoo is Maister Saunie keepin'?" Janet enquired.

"He's real weel, thank ye kindly. He's ben the hoose. I'll cry t' him to come oot.

"Saunie, here's Janet McCormick come to speir for ye!"

"How are ye, Janet?" was Saunie's simple greeting. "I hevna seen ye here this lang time."

"I'm very weel, thank ye. The rheumatics hevna been gi'en me near so much trouble th' year. An' hoo are ye keepin' yersel', Maister Saunie?"

There was something in the woman's tone that touched the dejected man's heart. He looked up sharply into her face. Her eyes were dim with tears. She was pitying him with all her soul. Saunie was always soft-hearted, and the touch of this woman's compassion was too much for his strength. With a sob that could not be stifled he sank into the armchair, and covered his face from view behind his lean white hands.

Tibbie looked at him for a moment in speechless agony. Her own face grew suddenly gray and drawn and old-looking. In that one moment the tragedy of a life was revealed. When she had recovered herself a little, she staggered over to her son, and, throwing herself upon her knees at his feet, clasped his weary head convulsively to her breast.

"Saunie, my bonnie laddie," she cried, "dinna be gi'en way like that. It'll come richt yet. The Lord's ben tryin' ye, but He'll soon be ready fer ye noo."

"Na, na, mithier," the broken man moaned, "I'll

never preach anither sermon. Ye maun let me work at the hairst th' year."

"Ay, ye'll work at the hairst, honey. But it's no' on Edradour's fairm that ye'll be gaitherin' in the sheaves. It's in the Maister's vineyard that ye'll work, where the fields are aye white to the hairst. Haud t' Him yet, Saunie! Haud t' Him yet! He hesna forsaken us. He winna try us aboon our strength. He'll gie ye your place in the Vineyard soon, Saunie. Haud t' Him yet!"

Janet McCormick took the brae with a sore heart. She hardly knew which to pity most—mother or son.

III.

THE MINISTER GETS HIS CAKES AGAIN

EVEN Glen Brearachan was stirred by the events of '55. As the summer wore on there was more talk about the "sojers" and the "Rooshians" than there was about the prospects for the harvest. But probably nothing would have come out of it if it hadn't been for Davie Burns. Davie was invalided home from the Crimea, and he had scarcely been a week in the Glen when his stories, his smart uniform, and his bandaged arm began to take effect. The lads hung about him with a reverential admiration of which Davie had hitherto had little experience. But he enjoyed his glory all the more because he had been given up by the Glen as a worthless ne'er-do-well when he joined the army. If Davie's tales were all quite true he was being treated very unfairly. Instead of wearing the uniform of a private in the 79th Regiment of Foot, he ought to have been dressed in the garb of a Colonel, and decorated with the ribbon of the Bath. But the Glen was only critical on Sundays. It allowed itself to be stirred to the heart by the "sojer's" tales, without requiring any proofs of their historic accuracy. Those were glorious times for Davie. He had only to speak of the hardships he had endured in the trenches, and

a half-dozen admiring auditors contended for the honor of making up to him for past privations with the best brew that Kirsty McIntosh could supply. Davie's leave of absence would be over in two months' time, and he was determined to make the most of his opportunities. His tales would protect him from the tortures of thirst as long as he remained in the Glen. But Davie hoped to make more out of them than that. For every recruit he secured, a substantial reward awaited him at the headquarters of his regiment.

It seemed for a week or two as if all the lads in the Glen were going with the "sojers." The older people were a little anxious about the turn things were taking. As Edradour quietly remarked in the smiddy one Saturday evening when the "sojerin'" fever was at its height, "It'll be gey sair on the auld foulk if the lads gang awa."

But there was no exodus after all. By one means or another the lads were all turned from their half-formed purpose. Fraser of Pitfourie settled the difficulty in a very practical way. Pete came home from the smiddy one night with a new light on his stolid, sun-browned face. There wasn't a dourer lad in the Glen than Pete. He worked at his father's beck and call from morning till night, and seemed never to have any wish to have the shaping of his life in his own hands.

"I'm gaun t' Perth to jine the sojers, faither," Pete intimated with a ring of independence in his tones that no one had ever heard before.

Pitfourie looked at his son for a moment as if he

were searching his face for some signs of mental derangement. But Pete stood the gaze without flinching, and the farmer was quick enough to see that a gruff assertion of authority, which had never hitherto failed to keep the lad in subjection, would only be likely to confirm him in his present purpose.

"And when wull ye be gaun', Pete?" he inquired calmly, as if he had no thought of putting obstacles in the way.

"The morn's nicht, wi' Davie Burns."

"But ye'll no' g' aff without pittin' the graip through the tatties, wull ye? I'm no' fit for that wark noo wi' the rheumatics in my shouthers."

"I'll get the tatties cleaned afore nicht," Pete replied, "and syne ye'll no' hev onything sair till the hairst."

Nothing more was said on the subject. Late in the afternoon of the next day Pete came plodding slowly home, wearied out with his ten hours' work.

There was nothing in his face to recall the enthusiasm of the previous night. A day with the "graip" had cured Pete of all desire to go "sojerin'." His mother gave him fresh cream to his porridge; and, after he had finished his supper, he shifted uneasily about in his chair for a moment or two.

"Wull ye be gaun awa' the nicht, Pete?" his father quietly asked, as he rose to bar the door.

"No' the nicht," and the stolid face grew suddenly red, "I'm teird."

That ought to have been the last of it. But the story leaked out through the dairy-maid, and the

would-be hero will go to his grave as "Sojer Pete."

But, if Pete failed him, Davie Burns secured an even less likely recruit. It began to be noticed that something had "come ower Saunie." He moved about more freely than he had been in the habit of doing. The taunts of the boys ceased to give him any concern. A new force was evidently working in his life. He began to look people straight in the face as if he had suddenly, and for the first time, become conscious of his manhood. Everybody noticed the change, but none guessed what it was that had brought it about.

One morning in the early days of July, Saunie rushed into his mother's cottage with an opened letter in his hand.

"It's come at lang and at last, mither," he cried, with a vehemence which would have sounded somewhat forced in other ears than Tibbie's. "I'll no' be gaun to the hairst efter a'."

"What's the maitter, Saunie? What is't, honey?"

The old body could say no more. She knew by a kind of instinct what Saunie's words must mean, and the thought that he had "come to his ain" at last was almost too much for her mind to take in.

"Read the letter for yersel,' mither, and ye'll see what it's about."

"I canna' see t' read letters noo, Saunie. Tell me what it's sayin'."

"It's frae the War Office in Lunnon, gi'en me an appointment wi' the sojers. I put in for't three months back."

Tibbie sank down upon her knees in the middle of the floor. Her heart was full. For more than five minutes she seemed to have forgotten that Saunie was in the room. She was speaking her gratitude to Him whom she had trusted through all the weary years of waiting.

"O Lord," she cried, "Thou's aye guid though we dinna lippen t' Thee whiles. Bless the laddie in the wark that Thou hast gotten for him. Keep him as the apple of Thine eye. Send him to the fecht wi' the sword of the Lord and of Gideon in his han's. For Christ's sake. Amen."

Saunie felt a thin hand clutch him by the arm and draw him downwards to the floor. Yielding to the gentle pressure, he found himself on his knees by his mother's side.

"Did I no' bid ye-haud t' Him?" Tibbie cried, as she clasped his head to her bosom. "The Maister is cryin' for ye to gang wi' yer heuk to the fields that are aye white wi' th' hairst."

When they arose from the floor Tibbie's face was radiant. But Saunie turned from his mother's gaze uneasily, as if he did not know how to meet it.

"And when wull ye be gaun awa?"

"The morn, Mither. I mauna be puttin' aff time."

"But there's no' a coach till Wednesday."

"I'll get the Aberfeldie mail at Ballinluig. It's only four miles to walk, and I needna start till six o'clock."

When the morning came Tibbie went a mile of the way with Saunie. It nearly broke her heart to part with him, but she was upborne by the conviction that

God had opened a way for her son at last. Her ideas as to what he was going to do were very vague. But she never for a moment doubted that it was in the capacity of a minister that he was joining the army.

After parting from his mother, Saunie walked briskly on for a mile or two without stopping. It was a fine, clear morning, and the air was heavy with the rich smell of the ripening corn. The traveler's step was firm and swinging. He walked as one who had just been freed from prison.

About a mile from the place where the mail would meet him in an hour's time Saunie came to a standstill. After he had looked up and down the road to make sure that no one was about, he ran quickly down into the fringe of hazel bushes that grew along the river's bank. His mother would have opened her eyes in speechless wonder if she could have seen what he was doing. His first act was to take off his black coat and throw it on the ground. White tie and silk hat were next discarded. When the hated garments had all been thrown off, Saunie tied them into a bundle, and with the help of a large stone dropped them into a deep black pool. They would tell no tales at the bottom of the Tummel. After watching his bundle till it sank quite out of sight, Saunie opened his carpet-bag and drew out some things, for whose presence there unsuspecting Tibbie was not responsible. These were an old weaver's coat and a cloth cap that had once belonged to his father. In these humble-looking clothes Saunie continued his journey,

and no one could have guessed that he ought to have been dressed in broadcloth.

Just as the dusk was beginning to settle, the mail drew up at the "Cross-Keys" in the High Street of Perth. Saunie climbed down from his seat to receive the welcome of Davie Burns. Little needed to be said between them, as everything has been previously arranged. In half-an-hour's time Saunie had taken the Queen's shilling, and enlisted as a private soldier in the 79th Regiment of Foot.

Tibbie only heard once from her son. He wrote immediately after his regiment had arrived in the Crimea, telling her that he was well and hoped to be home soon again when the war was over. For three months no more news came. Tibbie's heart grew sick with waiting. It was unlike Saunie to be forgetful.

But the silence was soon broken. In the first week of October a letter, directed in a strange hand-writing, was handed in at Tibbie's door. Her heart stood still when she saw it. By that strange motherly instinct which seldom errs, she divined its contents. When the Souter looked in by chance that morning, he found Tibbie sitting in her chair with the unopened letter in her hand, and a look of agony on her thin old face that haunts him still.

"Read it till me, John," she whispered in a shaking voice, as she handed him the letter.

The Souter took off his spectacles and rubbed them carefully with the under side of his apron. Adjusting them again, he opened the letter and read it slowly

through. It was signed by a former college companion of Saunie's, who had been for nearly ten years a chaplain in the army. The letter informed Tibbie that her son had been shot in the breast when trying to save the life of a wounded officer at the siege of Sebastopol. After a week's struggle in the field hospital he had died.

His last words were about his mother, and he bade her look forward to the time when they should meet again in a better land. There was nothing in the letter to undeceive Tibbie as to her son's position in the army. The writer evidently knew Saunie's secret and meant to keep it.

A calm, proud look gathered on Tibbie's face as the Souter spelt the letter out. Saunie had died a hero. The mother's heart was satisfied. She could hold up her head in Glen Brearachan again.

Though the truth came to other people's ears, Tibbie never heard it. Till the day of her death she spoke of Saunie as a "Minister wi' the sojers."

On the Sunday after the tidings of Saunie's death reached her, Tibbie sat in her usual place below the pulpit. The people were surprised to see her look so calm. But, as the Souter remarked to Janet McCormick on the road home from Kirk, "it was her pride that keepit her up, puir body." Tibbie had suffered too much in her life to be broken by any sorrow now. And Saunie had died a hero. That took the bitterness of death away.

The Minister seemed to be deeply touched. His prayer for Tibbie brought the tears into everybody's

eyes, and at the close of the sermon he spoke of Saunie's pure life and noble death in a way that flushed the cheeks of all the lads and lasses. They forgot the "Stickit Minister," and felt proud of having known the man who could be spoken of in such a way from the pulpit of the Kirk.

Tibbie sat in her pew till the congregation had dispersed. When the Minister came down from the pulpit she rose up and went slowly forward to meet him. They shook hands with each other at the foot of the stair, and neither seemed for a moment to know exactly what to say.

"Janet'll be findin' the washin' gey sair noo, Maister Carment."

"Janet's no gettin' younger, Tibbie, any more than you or me."

"I'm no' that thrang the morn, but what I micht come up and gie her a han' wi' the oatcakes."

"She'll be very glad to see you, Tibbie."

"Good-day wi' ye, sir."

"Good-day, Tibbie."

THE ATHOLE GATHERING

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I.

ON the day of the Athole Gathering there was an exodus from the Glen. In one notable year the exodus was so large that every house almost was left desolate. That was the year in which the annual games were joined with the celebrations held in honor of the child who had been born some months before to heir the titles and the lands of Athole.

"Ochone!" old Kirsty Scott sighed, as she heard the last group of holiday-makers stepping briskly down the road, "there'll be naebody left in the Glen th' day but auld Peter and masel'."

Kirsty and old Peter Lamont kept to their high armchairs at the ingle-side, because their backs were bowed and their feet tottering with the weight of the years that was on them. But the returning holiday-makers, as they looked in to give the patient old sentinels a good-evening on their way home, did not see upon their faces any sign of weariness or discontent. For Kirsty and Peter found it good and peaceful to be left through a long September day to watch the faces coming and going in the peat-glow, and to think of the better years that were dead.

The Gathering was to be inaugurated by Her Grace

at noon, and the general exodus began between nine and ten o'clock; but the boys had set out quite three hours earlier. There was a walk of ten miles to bring them to Blair, and some of the day's enjoyment would have been lost if it were a minute later than nine o'clock when they found themselves at the Park gates. The gates were opened at nine, and the joy of the day began. From every corner of Northern Perthshire carriages, dog-carts and vehicles of all shapes and sizes rolled into the Athole Park. Between nine and ten o'clock the stream was continuous, and the sight of the great coaches, with their wicked-looking yellow wheels, and the blare of the long huntsman's horns—which the youthful trumpeters on the box-seats set to their lips with needless frequency—were things to be remembered for twelve good months. Each equipage, as it swept through, was greeted with whispered exclamations of admiration, or—as in the case of Sir Neil Munro, whose battered and ancient coach was a visible suggestion of the meanness which gave him ill-fame—with quite audible and not wholly flattering criticisms. The occupants of the homely farm vehicles got a warmer welcome from the watchers at the gates, and when the Glen dog-carts began to trickle through, the last effort at restraint was thrown away. The cheering and the daffing from the dyke coping-stones brought a flush to some bonnie cheeks, and to some merry maidens' eyes a modest drooping of lashes. For there is grace given to the blatest lad that breathes on such a day as that.

Heartsome as the sight of them was, however,

the carriages, and coaches, and dog-carts did not make the chief attraction at the Park gates. What the Glen boys specially delighted in—and, for the matter of that, the boys of a half-dozen other parishes as well—was the march of the Duke's Retainers. The retainers fell into line in the wide square in front of the Athole Arms Inn, and marched along the high road for nearly a mile. The "Right wheel!" was given when the leading company got abreast of the Park gateway, and for another half-mile they continued their progress round the long bend that led towards the Castle pavilion.

The Duke of Athole is the only nobleman in the United Kingdom—and, indeed, the only subject of the British crown—who is permitted to keep a body of armed retainers. By royal charter he is granted the special privilege of maintaining a guard of honor from among the number of his own tenants and dependents. But the distinction has worn down, in these degenerate days, to something that is only a little more than titular. Farmers and halfin's have little leisure for soldiering, and, although they retain still some of the old clan feeling for their chief, and are not without a fluttering of pride as they don their brave warrior dress and shoulder their harmless rifles, they have not the time at their command that would be needed to make them even passably efficient. In the middle of July the Duke's Retainers are subjected to a few hours' drilling at Ballinluig—the central meeting-point for the whole of the Athole valleys;

and that is all the schooling they get for their one day of soldiering in the year.

The march along the high road from the Athole Arms Inn was usually effective enough. Unquestionably, the plough-tail and the furrow do not give the best sort of preparation for the step that is needed to make a military progress impressive; and the Colonel's admonitions towards an abatement of the semi-circular swing of the left arm, were invariably forgotten at the time when they ought to have been specially kept in mind. But when Josie Campbell, the Pipe-major—after a quite needlessly extended series of preliminary shrieks and wails—got fairly away, with his eight assistants six paces in the rear, the tramp of the Duke's Retainers was steady enough for a regiment in the Queen's Army. It was when the Park gates were reached that the difficulties of the day's campaigning came to be faced. The gates were not wide enough to let the little army through in the column-order, which made such a brave display on the high road, and gave the officers a proper prominence in front of their respective companies. Four files to the right and left of companies had to break off at the inward wheel and double round to the rear. That was an intricate movement to execute, and the effort to accomplish it successfully always ended in confusion.

At eleven o'clock the stream of vehicles suddenly slackened, and the interest of the boys who had been standing about the gates, or disposing themselves in various attitudes of ease on the dyke coping-stones

for two hours, began to droop. But, in less than five minutes, every heart rose again to the skirl of Josie Campbell's pipes, and at sight of the Duke's body-guard, as it swept slowly into view round the bend of the road, a little more than a quarter of a mile away.

The farmers and halfin's made a brave show in their warrior garb. But there was one minor disadvantage which the wearing of a uniform entailed; it blotted out, or, at any rate, covered up personal characteristics to such an extent that it became possible to identify individual soldiers only when the guard had got within forty or fifty yards of the gates. The boys shouted their cheerful greetings to every one they were able to recognize, and, as the discipline of the Athole Army was conveniently elastic, the men in the ranks called back again in hearty, unrestrained response.

At the inward wheel, the Colonel gave the momentous word of command—

"Four files to the right and left of companies!" That was to be the last occasion on which it would pass his lips, if the obedience that followed were not prompt and soldier-like. Before the march from the Athole Arms Inn began he had intimated his firm, unalterable determination to resign his command if his army blundered at the gates again. The effect of the intimation was weakened, however, by the fact that it had been announced on the day of the Gathering, at the same spot and in similarly impressive terms, for nearly twenty years. It seemed for a mo-

ment or two as if the Colonel's order were to be easily and neatly executed. The specified number of files broke cleanly off from the leading company, and executed the turn-about wheel with commendable precision. But the annual trouble began when they attempted to fall in at the rear. Against all military rules, and despite the repeated warnings of their unhappy commander, the men in the foremost company instinctively slackened their pace while the evolution was in progress.

"Deng it!" Sandie McPherson protested, when taken to task on the subject in the Inn booth, "ye wadna let a stirk drap behind withoot gi'en a look t' see what cam' ower him." Sandie held the honorable position of Sergeant-major in the Glen Brearachan corps, and was consequently counted responsible for the disaster at the gates, in so far as it affected the good fame of his own parish.

Looked at from the point of view of human friendliness and interest, Sergeant-major McPherson's explanation of the slowing-down was perfectly intelligible, and, in some respects, even indicated a praiseworthy attitude of mind among the members of the company to which he belonged. But the difficulty in military manœuvres, which the slackening of pace created, was too serious for the genius or the discipline of the Athole Army to overcome. While the men at the front did little more than mark time, the troops behind them, whose step had not been altered, moved up one by one until the spaces between the different companies had been obliterated. As a nat-

ural consequence, when the doubling files essayed to fall in at the rear of their own corps they found no opening for them. Moreover, being unskilled in military tactics, and having some difficulty in recognizing even their best friends under the disguise of an unaccustomed garb, they were quite unable to decide where their own company actually took end.

"Man, I'm tellin' ye," Sandie McPherson further delivered himself in extenuation of the mishap at the gates, "ye wad need t' look two times t' mak' sure o' yer ain brither, and, what wi' the Kornel flytin' and the laddies on the dyke lauchin' and yowlin', it put a body fair daft."

Before the initial difficulty could be settled, a second set of double fours were wheeling round and searching anxiously for some cleft in the ranks of the advancing army. When the third and the fourth sets were added, the despair of the frenzied Colonel, the confusion of the armed warriors, and the joy of the youthful onlookers reached their climax.

The veterans, after a brief struggle, were content to wait patiently outside the gates till the bulk of the army had passed through. Experience had taught them that, with some little surrender of dignity, they could solve the problem which the situation presented in their own accustomed leisurely way, and, as the exculpatory Sergeant-major philosophized, "if the Kornel didna like it he be'd t' thole it the best wy he could." But the recruits took the matter more seriously. Their single half-day's drill had filled them with an enthusiastic determination to maintain the

At a quarter to twelve o'clock the old brass cannon on the Castle tower boomed a salute, and on the stroke of noon the ducal carriage drew up in front of the pavilion—in the middle of the north side of the square. The north side was reserved for the crested carriages; not by any definite regulation, but by one of those indefinable social instincts that are more binding than any laws of state. To the right and left of the pavilion, they were drawn up in a close line near the ropes, so that their occupants might view the progress of events in comfortable dignity.

Along the east side, the farm dog-carts, and all the other conveyances that were content to remain unclassified, were heaped together in the kind of disorder that was known to the Moulin Inn-yard on the day of the Martinmas feeing-market. The horses had been taken out, and, with well-filled nosebags fixed behind their ears, were tied to a post-and-rail fence three or four hundred yards farther up the hill. The farm folk had no idea of taking their holiday out in the cramped stateliness of wagon or dog-cart. For them the chief attraction of the Gathering lay in the opportunity which it gave to exchange greetings with relatives and friends from other parishes. On that one day kinsfolk and cronies, whom toil and distance kept apart through all the rest of the twelve months, drew together again; and it was in those meetings, so far at least as the elders were concerned, that the joy of the annual festival was found.

An Athole man, who noted the composition of the crowd about the ropes on the south and west sides

of the square, could have seen at the second glance that there was some method in its arrangement. Before the interest of the games had been thoroughly roused there was little, indeed, to indicate that the onlookers were grouped on any sort of principle; but, when the big event was announced, the influence of the clan and the parish became immediately apparent. Glen Brearachan, Strathgarry and Killiecrankie had each its own rallying-point, and the rivalry between them found wholesome and frequent expression for itself, when competitors from the three parishes entered the square together to toss the caber or put the stone.

II.

THE chief event of the day was the dancing contest. For three years in succession Willie Cameron, of Strathgarry, had won Her Grace's favor at the Highland Fling. His position at the last Gathering had scarcely been seriously challenged; and yet there was a feeling, although nobody actually put it into words, that the prize had been earned too easily. Willie gave the steps correctly enough, but his achievement evoked no enthusiasm, because there was a certain lack of spirit about it. One or two pairs of observant eyes noted that the champion was a little jaded; he had not flung himself upon his dance with the abandonment of former years. Evidently the want of strong opposition had taken away from him the touch of inspiration, and left him to compete for the prize with nothing better than mere mechanical faultlessness. Now, technical correctness is good enough, but it does not make a sufficient title to the dancing championship of Athole.

Tammas Rattray—the Glen Brearachan Beadle and grave-digger, and in his day the nimblest footer in three parishes—had noted the performance of Willie Cameron at the Highland Fling in the previous year. But Tammas was a still man, who could keep his

thoughts to himself, or utter them aloud only when there were none to hear but the birds and the larch trees on the Gower Craigs. He said nothing about the purpose that had formed itself in his mind—not even on the Saturday nights, when the cheer of the Souter's hospitable ingle was apt to surprise the dourlest of the cronies into confidential revelations. Tammas kept his eyes open, and looked warily round among the boys of the Glen for someone who would give promise of wresting the too lightly won laurels from the champion's brow. It was on the evening of the Martinmas market-day that his choice was finally made. Under the old yew-tree, beside the Kirk-yard wall, the lads and lassies brought their day's holidaying to a close—before Roderick Farquharson had returned from his tea to take up his severe and lonely vigil—with an hour's merry footing to the music of Tammas Rattray's inviting and tireless fiddle.

Geordie McAllum was the Beadle's selection, and through the winter months and down to the summer's end the patient teacher schooled his pupil in the movements and the graces of the Highland Fling. Geordie's education was conducted on Saturday afternoons, when other duties did not come in the way, on the clean, even boards of the Minister's harness-room. Only one or two were admitted into the secret of the great challenge that Glen Brearachan was preparing against the day of the next Athole gathering; and the initiated kept their knowledge to themselves. Neither master nor pupil cared to have spectators while the lessons were in progress; the only one for whom the

rule of exclusion was invariably relaxed was Rob Carment. Nothing that Geordie McAllum did was ever perfectly satisfactory unless it had been accomplished under the eyes and with the approval of his tyrannical leader. Not that Rob was in the habit of speaking words of encouragement, or dealing out indiscriminate flatteries; on the contrary, his opinion of Geordie's abilities was low, and in all the years of their comradeship he was guiltless of a single utterance that could have been twisted into an expression of admiration or approval. In this matter of the dancing, to judge by the biting criticisms of which he delivered himself every Saturday afternoon, his contempt for Geordie's appearance and prospects was absolutely boundless.

"What for d' ye grip yer kilt as if ye were wringin' the claes on washin' day?"

"The'll tak' ye for a tyke if ye show yer teeth like that!"

"Janet McCormick wad gie her lugs to get they shanks o' yours for porridge spurtles!"

It was with encouraging remarks like these that Rob Carment helped out the education of his ambitious follower. Yet, somehow, Geordie did not seem to be disheartened by the uncomplimentary nature of his leader's criticisms. On one particular Saturday afternoon, when Rob was absent on an errand for the Minister, Tammis Rattray had to give up his teaching in despair. The most lift'ing tune his fiddle could produce was insufficient to beguile his pupil into a moment's abandonment. He missed the breezy, whole-

some presence of his remorseless comrade, and had to put his lesson off until Rob could take his accustomed seat again on the top of the paraffin-cask behind the harness-room door.

As the summer lengthened, and the great day drew excitingly near, the secret of the dancing challenge began to leak out. During the lessons, in Geordie's last month of preparation, there were always three or four additional spectators crushed up against the walls or into the angles of the little harness-room at the Manse. The Souter was one of them—elder of the Kirk as he was; and on the Saturday before the gathering there was a grand final rehearsal, accompanied—as some who ought to know cautiously whispered—by the music of a new and unexpected fiddler. The fact was never mentioned beyond the close, kindly circle of one or two firesides. But Sandie McPherson, who was never too careful with his tongue, nearly put it into the possession of the last man in the Glen to whom any such sacred secret ought to have been confided. It was on Sunday morning, as he joined a little group of cronies at the Kirk gates, that Sandie's loose-wagging tongue led him so seriously astray.

"Dod!" he exclaimed unthinkingly, "it was gran' t' see the Minister han'lin' the fidd——"

A quick cough and a sudden glare from the Souter broke Sandie's indiscreet revelation short. He glanced anxiously in the direction which a movement of his interruptor's eyes seemed to indicate, and, to his unspeakable confusion, saw that Tommy Rae was within earshot.

"That gowk tongue o' yours 'll bring ye t' trouble yet, Sandie!" the Souter growled reprovngly, when the Saddler had moved on a step or two. "Div ye want yon body t' be yelpin' through the parish at the Minister's heels like a Skye terrier?" Sandie McPherson was too much startled and subdued to make any defense. He gazed remorsefully at the Saddler's retreating figure, and engaged himself in miserable speculation as to the results of his thoughtless words. But Sandie scarcely needed to have troubled about the matter. Tommy Rae had too much to occupy his mind at that particular time to concern himself deeply about such casual remarks as he chanced to overhear. He was under a cloud; there was a charge of Voluntaryism hanging over his head, and, for weeks past, he had gone about muttering things to himself, and now and then making serious ferocious assaults with his clenched fists upon imaginary detractors, in a way that put his unhappy wife in dread lest the magnitude of his trouble result in a permanent unsettlement of mind.

The great moment had come. At three o'clock the dancing contest began, and the outcome of Geordie McAllum's long and difficult training was soon to be decided. His heart was set on victory as it had never been set on anything else in all his fifteen years of life. The honor of the Glen was in his charge; and the only way in which he could reward the pains and the patience of his instructor was by carrying off in triumph Her Grace's coveted favor. Yet, if the truth

were known, it would have been discovered that there was something else in Geordie McAllum's mind from which he drew his deepest inspiration. He wanted to win the championship that he might force the tardy respect of his masterful leader. Others might praise or blame as they pleased, and he would not be greatly concerned; but a single word of even half-contemptuous appreciation from Rob Carment would be sweeter than heather honey to his henchman's taste.

To do him bare justice, there was no heart in all the throng about the ropes that fluttered with a keener pain of anxiety, as the great moment drew near, than the heart of that same unfeeling scoffer, Rob Carment. He wedged himself between Tammas Rattray and the Souter, and, when the pipes began to play, grew white and dizzy with excitement and dread.

Strathgarry had the place of honor, and Willie Cameron was the first to be called. He was two years older than his rival, and several inches taller. No one could deny, as he stepped upon the boards, that Willie was a fine, shapely lad, and stood a good chance of carrying Her Grace's favor for another year. His opening steps were clear and confident, and in all his movement and bearing there was an elasticity which had been conspicuously lacking in his performance of the previous year. The excitement which serious opposition always arouses had brought about its natural effects—and, with all the closeness of the Glen, it had been impossible to keep the secret of the intended challenge from getting to Strathgarry. This time there

was something more than faultlessness in the champion's achievement, and when he brought his dance to a close with a graceful bend, and a swing of his Glengarry in the direction of the Castle pavilion, the cheering round the ropes was three times heartily renewed.

"Dod! that'll tak' some batin', Tammas," the Souter whispered anxiously as Geordie McAllum made his way towards the boards.

"Haud yer tongue!" the Beadle replied, with unusual incivility, as one whose feelings were too deep for words.

There was no outburst of applause when the Glen Brearachan competitor took his place upon the square platform in front of the Castle pavilion. To most of the onlookers, Geordie was unknown; and there was certainly nothing in his appearance or carriage to give him distinction. Nervous self-consciousness was openly confessed in the stiff poise of his head, and the awkward droop of his arms. Compared with Willie Cameron's graceful salute, his bow was a manifest failure; he took his Glengarry off with a quick jerk, and bobbed towards the occupants of the Ducal tent like a crow picking at a potato. Geordie was visibly and miserably ill-at-ease, until the strains of the bag-pipes called him to begin his dance. The opening steps brought an immediate, noticeable change, and Tammas Rattray's eyes began to flame with proud excitement, as he watched his pupil gradually abandon himself to the rhythm and the grace of the most fascinating of all Highland dances.

"What div ye say t' that?" he demanded of his doubtful-inclined companion, without taking his eyes from the boards for a moment.

But poor Tammias enjoyed only a short-lived triumph. Before the Souter had been able to frame a suitable rejoinder to his spirited interrogation, the face of things was suddenly and direfully altered. Geordie's Glengarry had fallen a little to the left, and he put his hand up to set it in its place again. The movement did not exactly throw him out of step, but it brought him to a fatal self-consciousness, and for a moment—the longest that some who watched had suffered in a life-time of years—the poetry and the grace were dead. Every practiced eye noticed the change. The dancer's kilt lost the rhythm of its swing, and knocked against his knees like a sail that flaps the mast when its grip of the wind is broken.

The Souter drew a long, whistling breath between his teeth. Rob Carment felt his heart sink and his head swim in the dizziness of disappointment and helpless rage. Tammias Rattray snapped his dry lips fiercely three times, and, after some ineffectual shapings at speech, found tongue for a single word, "Deng!" Whether the expression was a natural and blameless ejaculation of despair, or the outcome of a sudden and regrettable lapse into the regions of profanity, it would have needed the most skillful of casuists to determine. Had the question been referred to them, the Session of Glen Brearachan—"in view of all

the circumstances"—would have pronounced by a substantial majority in favor of the milder alternative.

But Geordie McAllum was not vanquished after all. At the beginning of the second step, the music lifted him again with a rallying surge; for the piper was a Glen man himself, and he did not intend to accept defeat without a fight. The position was serious, but Peter Morrison did not regard it as hopeless, and he made the pipe-tune beat with the courage in his own soul. Peter had done many a good service for the Glen, but that was the best—when he lifted Geordie McAllum up and put the spirit of the Highland Fling into his heart again.

Hardly a sound came from the boards. With the grace that unconsciousness begets, and the daring which the sight of failure brings, the dancer held the crowds in spell. There had never been such feeling of abandonment aroused since the great year of Davie Robertson's triumph—when he wrested the laurel from the brow of the Bredalbane champion.

All round the ropes there was a hush that told, as no speech could have done, how the magic of the dance had captured the Highland sympathies. There were some who would have freed themselves from the wild, sweet thrall of it, if it had been possible; but the mastery was too strong, too subtle to be resisted. Now and then the neigh of a horse, or the piercing pipe of a muir fowl from the loch at the top of the hill, broke through the silence with the suggestion, for those who had ears to hear, that in such a moment as that nature

is brought to rest. Where the highest slopes of the wide Park gradually melted, towards the north, into the thin fringe of larch trees that bordered the Athole forest, a roving eye could have seen the branching antlers of a stag, and on each side of him the forward-pointed ears of two timid does; they sniffed the wind warily, and arched their graceful necks as they watched the silent, motionless crowd in the hollow of the hills, and listened to the music of the pipes.

The strains rose; the beats quickened; there was an instant, instinctive answer in the harmony of the steps upon the boards. At that moment, in the clear light of a September afternoon, the vision of some who watched with breathless interest began to lose distinctness. The scene before their eyes seemed to shift and change, to take a new face upon it every moment, and to startle them at times with a memory of other days, and a sight of things that ought to have been covered with the dust of a hundred forgotten years. The Celt makes a good Christian, and the best citizen in the world; but at the heart of him he is a poet and an artist, and an old song, or a tune of the better days, or the rhythmic movement of a dance will steep his soul in a sea of wistful yearnings, to which no development of modern civilization makes the true, expected shore. There is something more than recreation or mere musical movement in the Highland Fling; it beats time to the songs of the lost days; it is like a wandered muir-bird, which carries down into broad, far valleys, the

feeling of the hills, and something even—to such as are keen of scent—of the heather's sharp, sweet smell.

Peter Morrison broke the spell with a last triumphant shriek of the pipes. The dance was ended, and Geordie McAllum had doffed his bonnet and bent his head before the crowd found its voice. There could have been no more eloquent tribute to the brilliance of the young competitor's achievement. He was not left long in doubt, however, as to the impression which his appearance had created; the cheers rose from all the four sides of the square in a roar of enthusiasm. Again and again, the multitude lifted its voice in loud and long-continued acclamation, as if the most vigorous throated applause were wholly inadequate to express the feelings of every unprejudiced heart. There was no nicety of judgment needed, no careful comparison of thinly divided claims; the honor of the day belonged to Geordie McAllum, and when the Secretary beckoned him to the Castle pavilion, and while the Lady of Athole pinned her favor to his breast, there was joy and glory in the heart of Glen Brearachan.

"Ay, man, Geordie, it's a prood mither ye'll hev' th' day," the Souter remarked when the victor came back to his own with a flush of triumph in his cheeks, and the Lady's favor on the left lapel of his coat.

"Feuch, laddie!" Tammis Rattray growled, "whatna like caper wes yon wi' yer bonnet?" Tammis was the most deeply satisfied man in the Athole Park that day; but he had the true schoolmaster's hunger for absolute perfection in his pupil, and, perhaps, he had not

insight enough to see that a triumph seems more glorious when it has been touched with a threat of failure.

The victor got the welcome that was most to his taste from the lips of his merciless leader.

"I wadna hev believed it was in ye, Spurly-shanks," Rob Carment condescendingly admitted, "no' if the De'il himsel' had threiped it doon ma throat!"

Unsatisfactory as it seemed, that particular appreciation was as the balm of Gilead to the soul of Geordie McAllum.

A YEAR'S REVEALING

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I.

THE MEETINGS

THE revival meetings were held at the best time of the year—in the first week of June, just after the Minister had come back from his annual ten-days' holiday. Some of the older folk looked forward for months to the Sabbaths that immediately succeeded Mr. Carment's home-coming; there was a light in his cool gray eyes, and the touch of a heart-lift in his voice that seemed to fill the promise of the spring with new sweetness.

The Minister spent his holiday in the little Inverness-shire village where he was born, and chiefly in the company of an elder, bed-ridden sister. Nobody in the Glen had ever seen Miss Elspeth, although her name was reverently familiar at nearly every ingle-side. But everybody knew that, after a visit to his invalid sister, Mr. Carment saw the things invisible to common eyes with new clearness. He did not talk about the effect which his yearly home-going wrought upon his spirit; that was a thing too holy and deep for speech—an experience to be locked up in the innermost room of his

soul among other unspeakable mysteries. If it had not been for the help which Janet McCormick gave them, the Glen folk might never have been able to account for the annual freshening of springs in the Minister's life—a freshening which the most dull-sighted among them could scarcely fail to notice.

There were one or two—uncertain of eye in earthly light, but strong and clear in their vision of the Land that has no need of sun in the day or moon by night—who dated their year by the sermons Mr. Carment preached after his return from the North; and Elsie McIntosh, who had been kept to the house all through the winter, invariably made her first appearance at the Kirk on the Sabbath after the Minister had come back. No matter whether the weather was favorable or not, Elsie was to be seen on the road that day. She knew the taste of wheat three times refined, and would not have missed for a month's churning in the Lettoch dairy, the prayers or the sermon in which the Minister expressed the spirit of his week's communion with Miss Elspeth.

And yet, it was quite well known that Mr. Carment did not receive the proposal that revival meetings should be held in the Kirk with any favor. When the suggestion was first made he had listened to it coldly, and the Saddler had to press the matter in the Session for a month before the Minister gave way. The hesitating consent at last wrung from him was not due to any argument which Tommy Rae had advanced. Tommy was believed to have difficulty in getting his

own wife to take him seriously. Like a good Glen woman, Mrs. Rae was loyal to her man, but her fealty was necessarily touched with a pitying contempt for the misfortune of a Southern origin which robbed his opinions of all importance.

The Minister's change of view was the outcome of an interview with the Souter. Not that John Sturrock was any more enthusiastic over the meetings than Mr. Carment himself; he knew things about which the Saddler was in ignorance, or of whose importance, at any rate, he did not take sufficient account. Some years before a slight element of discord had been imported into the religious life of the Glen at the coming of Mr. Daniel Wilson, the Dyer. In his own way Mr. Wilson was a good man, but he had views about the Kirk which were properly regarded as dangerous and revolutionary; and to the loyal, religiously conservative people among whom he had taken up his abode, it was never wholly clear that, in the midst of his many doctrinal eccentricities, the Dyer might still be charitably described as a man who had "the root o' the maitter in him." The truth is that there was nothing worse to be urged against Mr. Daniel Wilson than the fact that he belonged to the Plymouth Brethren. But that was enough; it made his final estate a matter of serious uncertainty—at least to people who admitted grace in Voluntaries with considerable misgiving, and in members of the Episcopal Church only now and then—when charity was momentarily enlarged by some

special kindness on the part of Colonel Hughes, the Duke's shooting tenant.

The disruptive influences of the new sect had so far been kept within very narrow limits. Beyond the circle of his own family, Mr. Daniel Wilson had succeeded in making only four doubtful additions to the number of his followers. Widow McAllum, Long John the Wheelright, and the Camerons of Knockfarrie were in the habit of attending the Sabbath afternoon meetings in the Dyer's front parlor, with which, according to his own frequently expressed conviction, the only hope of salvation for Glen Brearachan was intimately bound up. But Mr. Wilson was dissatisfied with the half-hearted allegiance of his four adherents; they insisted on afternoon meetings, because all their leader's arguments could not move them to make a complete break with the Kirk.

The Minister, as was only natural and right, regarded the Plymouth Brethren with disfavor. It was the Dyer's presence in the Glen which made him doubtful about the meetings; he feared lest advantage should be taken of the interest they might create to wean away some, who were not too well established in the old faith, to a kind of religious life that seemed to him narrow and churlish, and was—what was a much more serious consideration—wholly opposed to the belief and practice of the Scottish Kirk. On this important and vexing question the Souter was in sympathy with the misgivings of his Minister.

Yet, improbable as it seems, John Sturrock was the

very man who counseled Mr. Carment to withdraw his opposition and allow the meetings to be held. His views had been suddenly modified on seeing Tyree, the Carrier, arrive one Saturday evening at the Inn side-door in a condition of almost complete sobriety. That was a circumstance which no one remembered to have noted before, and, when it was put about that Tyree had come through Tullymet on his day's round, where meetings had been in progress for over a week, a new impression of the effects of revival gatherings was immediately created. The Souter felt that a movement which had influence enough to carry Tyree safely past the four houffs that lay in his road from Tullymet to Glen Brearachan must have some sort of supernatural sanction about it. He put his new view of the case before the Minister, and, as the Carrier's transformation appeared to have no other way open, it was agreed between them that the Tullymet evangelists should be invited to conduct a week of meetings in the Kirk at Glen Brearachan.

The meetings were begun on a Wednesday evening. There was enough of novelty for a week-night service to attract a congregation of between fifty and sixty people. No one had ever seen the Kirk lighted for worship before—except on Sabbaths and on the evenings of the two half-yearly Fast Days. But the feeling of novelty was not supported by anything that ordinary eyes could see. The meeting wore the look to which the Kirk was accustomed on a stormy Sabbath night, when the pews were more than three parts

empty. After the opening Psalm, the evangelists began by affectionately urging the fifty or sixty people, dotted about a building that was seated for between four and five hundred, to fill up the pews at the front of the Kirk; but the invitation, although several times repeated, and on each occasion with increasing persuasiveness, was treated with stolid contempt. No one moved; every worshiper clung to his own accustomed seat, and the service had to be carried through under conditions that were unmistakably chilling.

One of the evangelists was a North countryman himself—Gavin Campbell, a son of the Rannoch Catechist; the other was a Southerner unused to the ways of Celtic life, and although at the time he had only the dimmest premonition of the fact, doomed to a widening of his religious experiences that was to put him to some strange searchings of spirit. On that first night the one thing that saved Mr. William Small from complete disheartening was the fervent "Amen" with which Mr. Daniel Wilson—upon whose presence at the meeting neither Mr. Carment nor the Souther had calculated—punctuated the several prayers. That same "Amen," by the way, deepened the anxious scowl that brought John Sturrock's bushy eyebrows into one quivering line. Every time it was repeated, he glanced uneasily round in the interjector's direction as one who was on guard against the assaults of a stinging insect.

The evangelists spoke with simple earnestness, but it was difficult to judge whether or not they had made any impression on their hearers' minds. In the reverent,

deliberate way that was their custom, the worshipers left the Kirk when the meeting was ended, and even after they found themselves out in the air again in little loosely knotted groups of threes and fours they made no haste in expressing their opinions of the preachers and their message. One or two cautiously worded sentences contained all the criticism that the Glen had any mind to utter.

"Gavin is no' without unction," old Tibbie Cameron timidly ventured.

"His faither's son wad need to hev some poo'er o' the word," Roderick Farquharson assented grudgingly; and the form of the acknowledgment was understood to rob Mr. Campbell's efforts of all distinction, except so much as was exclusively due to the merit he had inherited from his esteemed and godly sire.

"An' the ither bit body seemed gey airnest, did he no'?" the kindly weaver's widow hazarded again.

"Oo ay, the crature, he did his best," Roderick contemptuously admitted.

From the first evening's experience, the Glen did not profess to be able to forecast the result of the week's meetings; but there was no uncertainty on the subject in the mind of one of the evangelists.

"There will be no movement here," Mr. William Small remarked to his colleague, in tones of dejected conviction, when the Benediction had been given.

"I wadna like t' say," Gavin responded dubiously. "It was a guid sign t' see James Main tak' a sneesh when ye were in the middle o' yer discourse."

"Tak' a sneesh!" Mr. Small exclaimed in bewilderment. "Are you referring to the old man in the middle of the third pew from the front who put me out by using his snuff-box during the address?"

"Ay, that was James Main—a godly man and a rare clever body forbye. If he's satisfied wi' yer preachin'—and he wadna hev wanted to bide awake if it hedna been grippin' him—ye needna doot but some guid'll come out o't."

The taking of a pinch of snuff had never before been counted among Mr. William Small's signs of religious movement. He had no reply to make to his colleague's statement of evidences, but appeared to derive some kind of comfort by humming perplexedly the opening lines of the hymn that begins with the assertion—

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform."

The nights that followed justified Gavin Campbell's prediction that the signs of interest in the meetings would be multiplied. On each succeeding evening the attendance of worshipers increased, and while the traditional stolidity of the Glen showed little sign of breaking up, there was a certain disposition towards flexibility beginning to show itself. At the meeting on Friday evening, Willie McPherson moved forward out of the back pew, on the side nearest to the door, in response to the evangelists' appeal. True, he contented himself with taking up a position beside Rob Dow,

only two seats nearer to the front. Yet, slight as the indication was, it appeared to justify Mr. Campbell in remarking to his anxious colleague: "Thir's poo'er in th' Kirk th' nicht."

Not till Sabbath evening came round did the results, for which the soul of Mr. William Small hungered, begin to make themselves apparent. At the close of the service nearly a hundred people accepted the invitation to remain behind for other and more intimate religious exercises. Mr. Daniel Wilson sat in the middle of the side pews, to the left of the pulpit, with his little band of followers grouped around him. No sooner had the Benediction been given than the good man began to lead his faithful disciples in singing a jingling religious chorus whose words and tune were known only to themselves. The ice was broken at last, and, under pressure of the evangelists' appeals, three of the younger people moved shamefacedly forward to the front pew. But the present history takes no account of the revival movement in its effect upon others; it has to do simply with the confession of Mary Cameron and the events to which it led.

Mary was the only child of Mr. Daniel Wilson's chief supporters. Up to this time, however, she had shown no special sympathy with the religious views of her parents. Serious things, indeed, in whatever form they presented themselves, Mary took somewhat lightly. She was the bonniest lass of her age in the Glen—a bright, blue-eyed maid of fourteen years, with pink-flushed cheeks that drew much secret admiration,

although they often sent a stound of dread into her good mother's heart, and an unruly frizzle of auburn hair about her brows and neck that, to some youthful imaginations, seemed the nearest earthly picture of an angel's halo. Every boy in the Glen was an unconfessed worshiper at bonnie Mary's shrine; and the adoration of two at least was more than openly suspected.

Rob Carment had never spoken of Mary to Georgie McAllum; Georgie had been equally reticent with Rob on the same sacred subject. But each of them knew that he loved the wayward Knockfarrie queen better than fishing-rods, yellow-spotted flies, pink-eyed rabbits, or even "tum'ler doos"—than which latter there could be no more engrossing objects of affection to a Glen Brearachan youth, whose natural likings had not been seriously disarranged. Moreover, it was silently understood between the two friends that they were rivals for the favor of bonnie Mary's witching smile. And Mary, demure little rogue as she was, realized the needs of the situation perfectly. She held the balance evenly between the two contending knights, so that neither could be sure whether he or the other were the chosen of her heart, and—what was of more importance—in a way that threatened no breach upon their friendship.

Now Mary Cameron was in the Kirk on the Sabbath evening of the revival meetings. She sat in the inner corner of the family pew, about three-quarters of the way back from the pulpit, just where the edge of the

gallery began to make that recess of shade in which the younger worshipers delighted to secrete themselves. Rob Carment and Geordie McAllum were reverently seated in the pew immediately behind the object of their adoration. After a second touching appeal from Mr. Small, Mary rose from her place and moved quietly up the passage towards the front pew. There was a wistful, half-dubious look on her mother's face as she watched her child from the side seats. Mr. Daniel Wilson smiled in pious triumph; he saw a prospective addition to his attenuated flock. But the minds upon which Mary's unexpected action made the deepest impression were those of her two boy-lovers.

Rob looked at Geordie; Geordie met his companion's gaze with eyes that were big with dismay. To both of them the very thought of insincerity was impossible. This was no roguish piece of play-acting. Mary had gone to the front because her sweet child-heart had been won for the peace of which the evangelists spoke. The boys had been too deeply schooled to treat a matter like this as if it were a thing of little moment. They felt that the hour was deep and awesome; it wrought about their hearts the stillness of a great dread. Mary's progress made them feel the nearness of invisible things as no words the preachers spoke had power to do.

A second Wilson chorus broke suddenly upon the boys' ears with the rough jar of a return to earthliness. With a short gasp of relief, and the old look in his eyes, each of them strained cautiously to get a glimpse

of the fair child-penitent in the front pew. Once or twice, as Mary turned half-round to throw a nervous, questioning glance in the direction of the side seats, they caught the glisten of the mist in her eyes, and saw that her bonnie cheeks were aflame. The teasing, tossing frizzle of auburn hair, dancing unmercifully in the lamp-light, brought the woeful lovers sharply back to the consideration of things wholly personal. Mary had gone from them. Only a few yards in front, and yet they felt that in these few moments she had been swept out of their lives. Two impenitent sinners could never more be viewed with favoring eyes by the winsomest lass in Glen Brearachan. Her smiles would be turned upon other faces; her sweet, nipping speeches were memories of other days. She would speak in a new tongue now, and her words were not for such as they. Gavin Campbell noted the look of misery on the boys' faces, and, in guileless misunderstanding of its meaning, whispered some words of encouragement in the ears of his insatiable colleague.

Rob Carment imagined that he had touched the bottom of woe on the night of Mary Cameron's confession. But there was a new and even more exquisite experience of suffering awaiting him. At the close of Monday's meeting, Mr. William Small spoke of the Savior's dying love in a way that touched every hearer's heart to the quick. When the appeal had been delivered, a moment's deep hush followed, and then a gentle movement here and there throughout the Kirk as of souls drawing the breath of liberty. Rob

felt his companion shifting uneasily in his seat, but took no special heed until a voice broke upon his ear in stricken, gurgling whispers:

"I'm gaun up, Rob," the shamefaced henchman intimated, as he rose slowly from his seat and turned upon his comrade's face a look of pitiful questioning.

Geordie had never taken such a serious step in his life before without the counsel of his masterful leader; it was a hard thing to turn an angle like that alone.

"What!" Rob exclaimed in a gasping whisper, as he felt his last grip of solid earth slipping from beneath his feet.

Geordie spoke no further word, but, slowly edging his way past his companion's drawn-in knees, began his blushing forward progress. No one could have guessed how much Geordie McAllum's decision meant to him; if Rob's knees had only touched him with faintest suggestion of delay, he could not have carried his purpose through. But the passage was unimpeded; sinner as he was, Rob Carment had too deep a reverence for the mysteries of spiritual workings to put any obstacles in his comrade's path. The Way was narrow at the best; he was not hardened enough even to wish that its straitness might be increased.

Rob Carment watched Geordie's progress up the passage in gloomy, fascinated silence. He felt as if dark Powers were closing him in upon unutterable doom. A sense of loneliness filled his boyish eyes with unwilling tears. His friend had gone from him; they would never be the same to each other again. In the

engrossment of his woeful meditations he had not noted that Tammas Rattray was moving stealthily about at the back of the Kirk, extinguishing the lamps one by one, in the hope that the evangelists would be roused to look at the clock that stood on the east wall, above the Manse pew. When the hanging lamp in the middle of the ceiling under the gallery, went suddenly out, Rob started visibly in his seat. The gloom around him threw the still brightly illumined front pews into clear, impressive relief. Light before, and semi-darkness behind, spoke to this youthful Calvinist a more solemn admonition than Mr. William Small—faithful exhorter as he was—had ever the grace given him to put into words. He thought of the last November Fast Day, when the godly and inexorable Dr. McTavish dwelt with curdling, dramatic vividness upon the misery of lost souls, rendered the more excruciating by their sight of saints in bliss across the impassable gulf. He had shuddered at the time as he listened; now, as the truth was brought home to his soul in the scene which the Kirk presented on that fateful Monday night, his flesh began to creep in horrid realization of certain and exquisite doom.

There was one miserable refuge of despair to which Rob Carment could not betake himself. The very thought of hypocrisy at such a time was impossible to the mind of a Glen Brearachan boy. Had Geordie dared the awful sin of insincerity in a matter of such sacred moment, he would certainly have been overtaken by the fate of Ananias and Sapphira before his forward

progress had taken him half the length of the Kirk. But Geordie was in earnest; he found his way unscathed to the front pew, and modestly seated himself side by side with bonnie, roguish, pious Mary Cameron.

Rob took one last look at his former henchman and his lost love as they bowed their heads in prayer, and then stole softly towards the door. In the long, melancholy howl of the Auchlat collie-dog, which smote upon his ears as he hurried home through the darkness, he seemed to hear the knell of doom.

II.

THE BACKSLIDING OF GEORDIE McALLUM

THE meetings were continued three days beyond the week originally arranged for. That was in itself an acknowledgment that interest had been aroused. But, indeed, there was no room for doubt; even the unbelieving must have seen that the quiet, steady life of the Kirk had been disturbed. Some people spoke as if the old order would never come back; but calmer souls were content to bide the sobering influence of time.

As it happened, the return to familiar grooves came about more quickly than even canny John Sturrock had predicted. A few weeks brought things back to their normal proportions. Mr. Daniel Wilson's attenuated flock had been augmented by the addition of only four new members—including, of course, the winsome child-confessor, Mary Cameron. With the enlarging of his flock, the Dyer found himself able to insist upon a complete breach with the Kirk. On the Sabbath after the meetings were ended, he summoned his faithful followers to his front parlor at the regular hours of worship in the morning and at night. That was the one thing that left a sore upon Mr. Car-

ment's heart; he was more grieved at the secession of the "brethren" than rejoiced at the good which the meetings had brought about in other directions. They had done good; there was a certain enlargement of heart throughout the Kirk that more than compensated for the inconsiderable withdrawals from kirkly fellowship, represented by the meagre Sabbath gatherings in Mr. Daniel Wilson's front parlor. In days that were soon to come, Mr. Carment himself recognized that the general outcome of the meetings was not something to be regarded with misgiving; it was a real forward impulse in the life of the folk he loved and shepherded.

Rob Carment and Geordie McAllum succeeded in avoiding each other for more than a month after the evangelists had left the Glen. They met in school and on the playground, of course, but they viewed each other furtively, and were in no haste to break down the wall of separation that had suddenly sprung between their hearts. That state of things could not go on for ever. Every day made it more difficult for the two friends to maintain their attitude of polite indifference towards each other. As others began to notice the new relation between them, curiosity was stirred, and various explanations were suggested. The most favored and probable hypothesis was that they had "cast oot." But the principals in this strange case kept their lips sealed; neither Rob nor Geordie offered any help in the solution of what was generally acknowledged to be a dark and difficult problem.

The inevitable settlement came about quite unex-

pectedly, as such things are apt to do. Rob Carment was at the smiddy on a certain Saturday evening towards the end of May; he bore on his arm the basket which contained the prospective Sabbath dinner at the Manse—a sheep's head and the four trotters which, by immemorial tradition, were included in the conception of one satisfying dish. Waiting his turn at the forge—for there were other heads and trotters to be singed besides those that came from the Minister's kitchen—he suddenly found himself face to face with Geordie McAllum, who had come to the smiddy on an errand similar to his own. Now, studious politeness is possible on the school playground, or on the Queen's high road; in the warm, sooty glow of Peter McGlashan's smiddy fire it was completely, even ridiculously, out of place.

"Where are ye gaun on the Queen's Birthday, Rob?" Geordie began, with a nervous quiver in his voice.

"I dinna ken," Rob replied unbendingly. "Maybe t' The Broom, if Wullie Kelman's rheumatics arena better afore the 24th!"

"Who's gaun wi' ye?" Geordie ventured again with a quite visible flushing of cheeks already carrot-red.

"Naebody," Rob replied; but, as if his answer implied a confession of loneliness, hastily added, "Spurly'll be comin', I expect'."

"Spurly's gaun wi' the Seatons t' the Dalosh," Geordie intimated with surprising quickness.

"Is he?" the Implacable retorted. "Oh well, the'll be somebody t' gang wi's, anyhoo."

There was a moment's silence. Both boys appeared to be engrossed in watching the Manse sheep-head, which Peter McGlashan had deftly gripped between a pair of tongs, and was turning about on the hot coals to singe the wool off.

"Wull ye tak' me wi' ye, Robbie?" and there was a new shake in Geordie's voice, and the suspicion of a glister in his eyes, as he looked for the first time that night full into his former leader's face.

"Ye wadna come," was Rob's startled response.

"Wad I no'! Just gie's the chance!" and the eager vigor in Geordie's tones left no doubt that the hunger for a return to old relationship was the biggest thing in his heart at the moment—a hunger that swallowed up in one bite all the solemnities of meetings and evangelists, and raged for the kind of appeasing that only Rob could give.

"But if ye'll be gaun wi' me"—the Implacable interrogated, with sudden descent into the weak and dangerous casuistry that could only end in moral collapse—"what'll the Hunkerers say?"

There was nothing intentionally contemptuous in Rob Carment's description of Mr. Daniel Wilson's little flock; he simply gave them the name by which they were commonly known—a playful satire upon the singularity of their devotional habits.

"They'll be sayin' ye're a backslider," Rob continued with impressive solemnity.

"I'm no' carin'," Geordie answered desperately, for

the word backslider had something of the awesome significance for him that his companion saw in it.

"There's no hairm in fishin' that I can see, and I dinna ken what they want wi' meetin's on the Queen's Birthday," he added with the daring dourness that overfeeding breeds.

"A' richt! ye can come t' The Broom wi' me if ye like. But mind, ye're no' t' be sayin' I was temp'in' ye."

In the under-ground of Rob's mind there was an uneasy feeling about the effect of this arrangement on his own and Geordie's ultimate estate.

"No," the backslider promised stoutly.

"No' even t' yersel'," the Implacable insisted in a last subtle effort to secure himself against the menace of the future.

"No, Robbie, ye're no' temp'in' me; I'm temp'in' masel'."

The arrangement was concluded on the unsatisfactory terms proposed. Geordie's blood was to be upon his own head. If his retrogression wrought such woe for him as the boys had been taught to associate with willful wandering from grace, he was not to turn his tortured eyes reproachfully in the direction of his friend. Rob Carment was to be held forever innocent in this matter of the backsliding of Geordie McAllum.

Curiously, it was to the most guilty party in this strange covenant that all the joy seemed to belong. As the two made their way homewards in the cool spring moonlight, it was Rob's spirit that showed signs

of straitening. He did not speak much, and in the little that he said took occasion to establish over again the relation of entire personal innocence in which he stood to Geordie's backsliding proposals. The chief transgressor, unhappily, did not appear to share in the anxieties of his leader. On the contrary, he discoursed with disappointing eagerness on the prospects for the Queen's Birthday, and the preparations that were needed to make a stolen visit to The Broom all that hopeful anticipations pictured it to be.

"It's a mercy Wullie Kelman's no' fit t' be aboot th' noo," the lapsed brother unfeelingly observed.

"Maybe he'll be better afore the 24th," was Rob's discouraging rejoinder.

"Anyhoo he'll no' tramp that far efter a month wi' th' rheumatics."

"We'll start early, Robbie, will we no'?" the prospective poacher continued in the excited, voluble style of one who has been newly released from prison, and rejoices in unlooked-for liberty.

"We shouldna be later than fower o'clock, but I dinna ken if I'll waken in time."

"I'll steer ye, Robbie," the backslider promptly promised, having evidently no doubt the unhallowed joy of what ought to have been a forbidden enterprise would call him to early wakefulness on the morning of the Queen's Birthday. "Dinna fash yersel'! I'll fling some sand at yer windy at half-fower; and ye needna bather aboot worms. I'll get enough for the two o's."

Geordie's parting exhortation did not quite relieve his friend of all remaining scruples. For the time that it took to travel the distance that lay between Widow McAllum's cottage and the Manse gate, he continued to "fash" himself on the subject of Geordie's backsliding, and found a certain amount of melancholy satisfaction in mentally rehearsing the terms of the covenant by which he was relieved from all participatory responsibility.

It would be an exaggeration to represent Rob's mind as having been in a state of unrest during the three days that intervened before the Queen's Birthday came round. He thought very little about the enterprise to which he had pledged himself on Saturday evening, until the eve of the 24th brought it vividly to mind, and set him about the making of such preparations as were needed. Even then it could hardly have been said that he was afflicted with a renewal of compunctious visitings. To a practiced and passionate angler the mere handling of fishing-rod and basket, of casting-lines, bait-hooks, and flies, is engrossing enough to put a conscience of a thousand tongues to silence.

But when all preparations were made—the fishing-tackle, with the fisherman's boots and Janet McCormick's generous bundle of sandwiches, deposited carefully in a corner of the washhouse behind the kitchen door—the battle had to be fought over again in the silence and half-gloom of Rob's candle-lighted bedroom. A few hours' sleep and he would be committed to the enterprise about which he had such serious mis-

givings! The mental torturings of this youthful Calvinist may seem ridiculously unimportant. But they were real to himself, at any rate, and they belonged to that battle of the soul in which he had been trained to look for the final issues of life. When he had put his candle out, Rob hesitated. Something held him back; he could not say the prayer in which from childhood he had committed himself to the keeping of Him who slumbers not nor sleeps. He slipped guiltily into his bed, determined that before his eyes were sealed he would work this whole matter out to a satisfactory conclusion.

There was one point on which the youthful reasoner had no difficulty in coming to a settlement. The Hunkerers were doing a wrong to the Kirk; the Minister himself disapproved of their proceedings, and it could be no sin to help in weaning away from Mr. Daniel Wilson the attachment of a follower to whose allegiance he had no just claim. By the clearness of his first finding, Rob was encouraged in the hope that when the whole subject had been mentally thrashed out, his personal innocence of all transgression would be radiantly established. But no one who had been trained from infancy in the remorseless logic of Mr. Carment's teaching could rest complacently in a position like that. Rob recognized that the investigation had to be pushed back a step. Geordie's fellowship with the Hunkerers was an after-development; it had followed upon the profession which he had made in the Kirk. It was to that profession, and not to the

matter of his connection with Mr. Daniel Wilson's little flock, that the question of backsliding properly belonged. Was this Queen's Birthday enterprise inconsistent, not with the tenets of the "brethren," which the blanketed reasoner regarded with righteous indifference, but with the solemn step which Geordie had taken while the meetings were in progress?

To this deeper question Rob found no very satisfactory answer. A fishing-excursion, as such, was of course an entirely blameless form of recreation; it was even touched with evangelical and apostolic sanction. And the fact that the question of the morality of casting a hook into forbidden waters formed part of the problem did not add appreciably to the reasoner's perplexity. Poaching, at the worst, was hardly a sin at all; it took rank with smuggling among the things which are inexpedient rather than unlawful. No properly furnished Celtic mind would ever be detained long in the discussion of mere trivialities like these. Where, then, did the element of jeopardy come in? If fishing were a harmless occupation, and poaching a venial accessory, why should there be any misgivings about the excursion to The Broom? In what way did Geordie incur any risk of being truthfully described as a backslider?

Robert Carment, when this satisfactory point in his reasoning had been reached, gathered the blankets comfortably about his shoulders as one who had fought his battle and earned the sweet release of sleep. But the feeling of complacent conviction was short-lived.

Suddenly, as with the keenness of a knife-stab, the truth that he had been fencing off for three days struck him to the heart. The peril for Geordie McAllum did not lie in fishing, even when forbidden waters drew his line, but in taking up again his interrupted companionship with himself—Rob Carment.

The truth had searched poor Rob out of his last refuge, and, as it held him in its torturing grip, he found himself trying to live over again those moments in the Kirk in which he had watched Geordie McAllum as he made his way shamefaced to the front pew. Why had he not been moved to follow his companion's example? The evangelists had made no difference between them; if Geordie could hear the Voice that called, why was it inaudible to him? Something of the dread that fell upon his soul, as he heard the Auchlat collie-dog howl in the night on his way home from the Monday's meeting, came back to him again. He was doomed; excluded from the number of the elect; unable to feel as others felt.

"Well, I canna help it," the restless reasoner sighed, with that weary relapse into fatalism which is the pitfall that besets the steps of every Calvinist.

But the matter was not ended yet. If Geordie was put to peril by returning to the old relationship with himself, he—Rob Carment—who had given his consent, was a guilty partner in his companion's sin. Was there not a Scripture, indeed, that would pass upon him the greater condemnation? The Shorter Catechism, he dismally reminded himself, had something clear and

direct to say on this point. Although Rob knew by heart the answer to the 83rd Question, yet, with exquisite refinement of self-torture, he got upon his knees and groped about the top of the chest of drawers at the foot of his bed in search of the thumbed and tattered Catechism which was buried somewhere in the general débris. When his fingers closed at length upon the elusive booklet, he began with his other hand a second miserable exploration in quest of his wandered matchbox. His search was honestly conducted and met with its due reward, although, if the truth may be told, Rob half-hoped that he would be unable to read to himself the fearful condemnation which a perusal of the Catechism would certainly entail. But there was no friendly influence at work in the little bedroom over the Manse front door that night. Rob Carment had the book and the matchbox in his hands; he must light and read: *Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.*

There was no more room for doubt. He must either incur inconceivable addition to the doom already awaiting him, or summon up resolution enough to break his compact with Geordie, even at the eleventh hour—when he saw him under his window at break of day equipped with all the seductive apparatus of the fisher's craft. Poor Rob! His eyes had grown heavy by this time; his reasoning had lost its sharpness. As he began to surrender himself to the sweet oncome of sleep, he hardly knew which course he had made up his mind to take.

The manner of Rob Carment's awaking at half-past four in the morning was an indication that the battle of the previous night had been carried forward into the world of sleep. He started up in his bed with blanched cheeks and a quiver in every nerve; the foreboding misery of his dreams had been suddenly changed into certainty of dread. There was Something calling him, knocking at the inmost door of his life, demanding to be admitted. For three awful moments he listened with held breath, and the gray morning silence beat upon his soul with stifling suggestion of doom. The summons was repeated, and, as he heard it the second time, Rob sprang from his bed in the relief of a suspense suddenly broken. It was only Geordie McAlum throwing handfuls of sand at his window, and bidding him be astir for the joy of a day on The Broom.

In the wild gladness of a return to such temporary safety as was associated with the continuance of ordinary earthly arrangements, Rob moved on tiptoe towards the window. His sense of relief put him to new peril; there was some danger of his forgetting the solemnity of his midnight wrestling of spirit in the exquisite joy of the moment. As he cautiously lifted the window-sash, his moral outlook became still more grave. A wind-breath smote his sense with the rich earthy smell of the Aldour potato fields; the sun, that was just beginning to stir above Ben Vrachie away to the back, was playing gloriously upon the hills in front, making the heather burn on the higher slopes, with long strides picking out its downward path in purple

and gold, till it fell suddenly on the old harled walls of Dunfallandy House and set them glistening like a palace of crystal; and dancing, with dangerous, tempting merriment, on the waters of the river Tummel, where the mountains steeped their feet.

But Rob had not quite lost the battle yet.

"I dinna think it's t' be a guid day, Geordie," he whispered over the window, in weak and mournful parleying with truth and conscience.

"Guid day! Man, Robbie, what's wrang wi' ye?" the astonished fellow-sinner retorted from the gravel below. "It's a scrumptious day! Come on quick! Ye dinna ken what I hev gotten here," and the tempter held up to his friend's view a grimy mustard-tin.

"What is't?"

"Stripeys!"

"Stripeys!! Where did ye get them?"

"I heard Bob Seaton tell'n Spurly 'at there wes some th' noo at the Tattie-mill, and I ran a' the road efter school and got there afore him. Ther's plenty for the two o's."

"Bide a wee!"

The window hangings were broken and the lower sash pressed too heavily on Rob's shoulders to enable him to do full justice to Geordie's epoch-making announcement. He drew back into the room, reached out from the wide bottom shelf of the book-case, in which the overflowings from the Minister's study were stored, a portly vellum-covered volume. When he had raised the window-sash again, he used the book as a prop to keep it in place; with the help of Calvin's "In-

stitutes of Theology" Rob Carment looked out to his doom.

"Show's them, Geordie," he commanded in the whispers which the hour alone allowed.

Geordie McAllum obeyed; he took the lid of the mustard tin off and shook some of the contents out into the palm of his left hand. In the fresh morning light Rob could see the stripeys wriggling and quivering through the green, sparkling moss; it was the most ravishing combination of colors—emerald shot with living threads of amber and crimson—that imagination could conceive.

One long, fiercely satisfying look was enough; Rob drew in again with the light in his eyes that only the angler understands.

"He michtna hev done that," he sighed, as he hastily donned his clothes.

The reference was not to Geordie McAllum; it was to Another with whom Rob quite orthodoxly believed that he had been engaged in long and sore conflict. He recognized that he had been defeated, but appeared to cherish the conviction that unfair means had been employed to secure his overthrow. Ordinary seductions he might possibly have been able to withstand, but stripeys!—those red and gold worms so hard to get, so sure and deadly in their enticement, the meditation of mediaeval fisher monks, the dream of a perfect bait come true—stripeys!!

The backsliding of Geordie McAllum and the participation of Rob Carment in the heinousness thereof were established facts.

III.

THE MINISTER DINGS HOLES IN THE FENCE

IN a year's time the Glen had almost forgotten the meetings. Occasionally, at the Inn side-door on a Saturday afternoon, the memory of them was half-mockingly recalled, when the Carrier was observed to have relapsed into his accustomed unsteadiness of gait. The critics at the Brig found a complete condemnation of all revival methods in the unsatisfactory independence of Tyree's crooked legs.

But there were one or two who recognized that the life of the Kirk had been subjected to a wholesome and helpful discipline, and that the general outcome of the evangelists' work had been in the way of what was good. Mr. Carment held that view; and there was certainly no visible sign of disheartenment about him, as he paced the gravel in front of his study window, on a morning in mid-April. He was brooding over the one sermon of the year that he always took deepest delight in delivering—the sermon that announced the end of the Winter and the advent of Spring on the text—"The time of the singing of birds is come."

And Mr. Carment never made a mistake. As the

people wended their ways home from the Kirk, after the sermon had been preached, they felt the breath of the Spring on their cheeks; noted for the first time that the dandelions were beginning to hang their lamps timidly out along the banks of the burns; and pointed out to one another—as something that indicated an almost supernatural accuracy in the Minister's announcement of the coming of the bonnie days—that even the slow oak-buds showed signs of bursting.

The joy of the Spring was in Mr. Carment's carefully measured steps; in the sharp swing of his turn, under the old elm-tree at the bend of the drive, to retrace his thirty-two steps; in the outfling of his arm, and the tones of his voice, as he stopped occasionally to declaim some sentence of the seething sermon. The Minister was sensitive to the influences of Nature; he had something of a child's gladness at sight of the first Spring flowers, and never missed the leap that the early call of the cuckoo brings to a simple heart. But there is no doubt that the annual holiday had some part in the making of Mr. Carment's feeling of hopeful peace. He was in the high thrill of his vision days, and was looking out upon the new-making of God's beautiful world with quickened spirit and eyes whose sight had been renewed. However it had come about, the Minister's mind was at rest. He steeped himself in the thoughts that were to be shaped into a hopeful resurrection-message, and, if he had any memory of the meetings that had given him so much trouble a

year before, it was not of the kind that had a sting about it anywhere.

"Ther's somebody t' see ye, sir!"

"Is there? I'll be in in a moment, Janet."

The Minister was intent upon capturing an elusive image; he did not betray the curiosity which his housekeeper's announcement was clearly designed to arouse. Without further comment, and giving Janet McCormick no opportunity of supplementing the information that she had supplied in the terms that were purposely and vexingly vague, he continued to pace the path at the outer edge of the gravel that years of usage had beaten into well-marked distinctness. The housekeeper watched him for a moment or two, and then, with a regretful murmur, went back to her kitchen sovereignty. Janet had not found Mr. Carment as apt a pupil as she could have wished him to be. The curiosity which was easily stirred in her own mind seemed to have no place at all in the Minister's life. He took situations with surprising equanimity, and the most carefully modulated tones of suggested mystery were powerless to move him to the kind of interest that would have gladdened his housekeeper's heart.

When the idea he had been wrestling with was brought into subjection, Mr. Carment bethought him of his visitor. The sight of that morning caller, as she rose from her chair in the study when the Minister opened the door, brought a look to his eyes that Janet McCormick, had she been privileged to see it,

would have accepted as a complete satisfaction of all her curiosity.

"How are you, Mrs. Cameron? I'm glad to see you. There's nothing the matter at Knockfarrie, I hope?"

The shamefaced Plymouth Sister did not immediately reply.

"Mary's gey bad, sir," she answered when, after a moment or two, she was able to command her voice, and there was a hunger in her poor, motherly eyes that would have melted the hardest heart in the Glen.

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear ye say it," Mr. Carment rejoined with that quick, sensitive sympathy in which the parishioners of two generations had never failed to find comfort and healing. "I knew she wasn't strong, but I hadn't heard that there was anything seriously wrong."

"It was only a week syne that she took bad, sir. She had a bleedin', and the doctor says she'll no win through."

The mother told her simple, pitiful story in one gasping sentence, and, when it was ended, bowed her head upon her hands and wept.

"This is sore for you and the gudeman, Mrs. Cameron," and there was Christ's own gentleness in the Minister's tones. "If God is calling your only bairn, you'll need His strength to take you through."

"Ay, sir, and that's why I'm comin' t' you," the mother sobbed. "We're in the mirk at Knockfarrie th' noo. But ther's some things we're seein' a bit better than we did afore. The bairn's cryin' t' see ye, sir,

and th' gudeman an' me are thinkin' we werena doin' richt t' leave the Kirk. Ye'll no' mak' it hard for us, Maister Carment, if we're seekin' t' come back t' the auld way?"

"Hard! My poor friend, I'm more sorry for you than I have words to tell. Don't vex yourselves about leaving the Kirk. God brings things like that about for purposes of His own, and I am sure the gudeman and you will come to know a great deal more than many people do about the Savior's comforting love. Try and bear up. Maybe it is not to be so bad as ye think. I'll be up this afternoon, and if I can give bonnie little Mary any comfort and help, she'll see me often enough."

For more than six weeks the Minister drove his dog-cart into the Knockfarrie farm-yard almost every day. If there was any diffidence about the reception that was given him at his first visit, it did not live long. For Mr. Carment had skill in dealing with men and women; he had not been ten minutes in the Camerons' house till the old relationship between the inmates and himself was re-established. Suffering brings its own clouds, but it is apt to break up other kinds of gloom and set things in their true proportions. The matter of the Kirk-forsaking was never mentioned again; the few words that had passed between the sore-hearted mother and the Minister, in the Manse study, made it unnecessary to speak further of things which none of them took any pleasure even in calling to mind. It was not by grave discourse, not even by the

suggestion of rebuke, that the Camerons were brought back to a firm and contrite loyalty towards the Kirk. The Minister won their respect and confidence again, as old and proved friends commonly do, by the power of the Love which never faileth, and, even in the midst of misunderstandings and religious conceits—most trying of all disciplines by its very littleness!—thinketh no evil.

For months, after all was over, there were ingleside whisperings of the things that passed between bonnie Mary Cameron and her old Minister. Mary was wearing quickly to the evening of her short, sunny life, and, because the world was still fresh and beautiful to her child-eyes, she listened with the greater eagerness to the sweet, wistful, homesick words in which one, who was beginning to be weary of the sun, described the King in His beauty and the Land that is far off.

There were folk learned in God's lore who said that Mr. Carment grew deeper into the child-heart himself through his daily communings with little Mary Cameron. And, indeed, it was not a difficult thing to believe; for that was the way of growth that seemed most natural to him. He had his failings, but there clung about his life the kind of fragrance that good men associate with flowers and little children. Even Mr. Daniel Wilson, while he denounced the doctrines of the Kirk—of whose true interpretation, be it said, he was as ignorant as a babe of yesterday—spoke no ill of the Minister. That one fact, by the way, miti-

gated the severity of the final judgment which the Glen passed upon the Dyer's character and works. Nobody spoke a word of open denunciation; he was greeted as before with the contemptuous kindness which immemorial tradition prescribed as the proper disposition towards all persons believed to be endowed with limited intellectual capacity. But Mr. Daniel Wilson's brief day was ended with the return of the Camerons to kirkly fellowship. The meetings in the front parlor grew smaller, and when Widow McAllum and Long John gave up attending, the Dyer retained the allegiance of no one but his wife. In moments of prophetic uplifting, he was understood to have doubts about even Mrs. Wilson's final safety, and to be endeavoring to reconcile himself to the lonely glory of individual translation to the regions celestial. There were some who said that meek Mrs. Wilson found the prospect of an ultimate separation from her difficult man not quite as black as he painted it himself.

In the illness of bonnie Mary Cameron the Minister's housekeeper found one of the opportunities which she was never known to let slip. Her spirit had been wrestling with a difficult problem during the first five or six weeks in which Mr. Carment made daily visits to Knockfarrie. When any hope of recovery could be entertained, Janet McCormick carried a quart bottle of the Minister's nettle-broth to the person who was ailing, in the firm belief that it would lead to an almost miraculous restoration of health. But there

was a suggestion of indelicacy in offering the nettle-broth where renewal of health could not reasonably be looked for. And Janet knew, with the unerring instinct of kindly womanhood, that little Mary's sickness was unto death. She could not affront the feelings of the heart-stricken Knockfarrie folk by approaching them in the cheer that belonged to the nettle-broth ministry.

On the other hand, it was only when the last ray of earthly hopefulness had died out that Janet McCormick carried to a sick-room, soft-footed and solemn, a shape of her far-famed "calf-jeely." No one had died in Glen Brearachan for more than a generation without the comforting anointing to sense and spirit which was ministered by the wonderful amber-colored "jeely" that came from the Manse kitchen. It was almost as essential in hours of extremity as a visit from the Minister himself—a sort of simple viaticum that was steeped in the tender memories of more than thirty years. And Janet had never been known to make a mistake in the exercise of her kindly priesthood. There was always a hope of life when she brought the nettle-broth; there was never a doubt about death when she came across the door-stone with a shape of "jeely" in her hands.

Now Janet had been waiting her opportunity, and on a Saturday afternoon at the end of June she made up her mind that the solemn hour had come. The Minister had just returned from his visit to Knockfarrie; from the few words he said, it was evident that

bonnie Mary was wearing to the end of her short life. Janet McCormick lost no time. With her accustomed energy and decisiveness she set about the making of the "jeely," and in the evening, towards eight o'clock, when it had got to be cool and stiff and clear, like a child of the seafoam and the sun, she placed it impressively in Rob Carment's hands, and bade him carry it to Mary of Knockfarrie.

Rob took the shape of "jeely" into his hands without speaking a word; he could not trust himself even to lift his eyes to the housekeeper's face. For weeks he had known that Mary Cameron was slowly slipping away; but there was a shock in the intimation which Janet McCormick's commission conveyed—the stound that Death always brings, however near his coming may have seemed. To a boy's mind especially Death is an awesome thing; the mere suggestion of his presence lays a touch of ice upon his healthy, uncritical joy of life. And there was more than Death in the wearing away of bonnie Mary of Knockfarrie. Rob's young heart's love had not been killed by the separation of his child-queen from the old ways of kirkly life and fellowship; it had only been deepened, made more wistful, and touched with the pain of jealous helplessness. During the past few weeks all the littleness had gone out of it; in the solemn surroundings of sickness and coming death he thought of his lost love as a wandered son thinks of his mother's face when she bent to listen to his infant prayer. For a boy's adoration of a bon-

nie maid is generous and pure; it is free of the passion that thrills the senses of riper years, and flings its worship at the feet of its queen with a homage in which nothing is withheld.

Only a boy, in such an hour as that, would have thought of seeking the companionship of his acknowledged rival for the favor of bonnie Mary's sweet goodwill. That was the impulse upon which Rob Carment immediately began to act. He felt that Geordie McAllum must go with him to Knockfarrie; for his one thought now was of Mary—bonnie Mary soon to die! She must hear about her door for the last time the steps of the lad she loved the best.

Geordie came to the door at his leader's knock. There was need for few words; one glance at Rob's face, another at the burden he carried in his hands, and Geordie knew.

"Will ye come wi's, Geordie?"

"Ay, if my mither'll let me."

"What is it, laddie?" Mrs. McAllum called from within.

"Rob's seekin' me t' gang wi' him t' Knockfarrie," the boy answered from the door. "Mary's very bad; he's got the jeely."

"Eh, peety me, the bonnie doo!" the kindly widow exclaimed. "Gang yer ways up wi' Rob, Geordie, and haste ye back! I'll be wearin' t' hear the news."

The boys found little to say to each other as they took the brae. Now and then Geordie stole a wistful glance in the direction of the burden his companion

was carrying carefully with both his hands; it was only from the Manse that "jeely" could be sent at a time like that. In sight of the Knockfarrie windows the travelers came to an instinctive pause. They were close to Mary Cameron; but they were getting near to Death, too, and the dying child-queen grew suddenly great and awesome to her two heartsworn knights. It was not dread alone, however, that made Rob Carment hesitate. There was a struggle going on in his soul; not the kind of conflict, perhaps, that has far-reaching issues, but a fight none the less that was difficult to win.

"Geordie," he announced suddenly, and there was the suspicion of a quiver in the masterful tones. "Ye'll cairry the jeely."

"What! Eh, no, Robbie, I couldna do that!"

"What for no'? I've cairried it a' the way, and—my airms—are tired."

With that entirely insufficient explanation, Rob thrust the shape of "jeely" into his companion's half-willing hands, and, giving him no opportunity of making further objection, led the way in quick, soft strides to the farmhouse kitchen door.

Mrs. Cameron herself answered the scarcely audible knock.

"Come in, laddies," she said, "it's kind o' ye' t' be comin' up at this 'oor o' th' nicht."

Noiselessly and with held breath the boys passed into the wide farm kitchen. They had often sat by its hospitable peats before, but everything in it wore

a new look that night. The chairs and table, the spinning-wheel and meal-girnal seemed to be clothed with strange stillness. From the narrow passage that led to the parlor and bedrooms, a thin, guttering light drew their eyes towards the inner, half-opened door; they could hear the mournful tick of the eight-day clock, which was hidden from view in the gloom of the steep attic staircase, as though it pulsed to the sorrow of the child-life far out on its ebbing tide. Everything spoke of Death—the gentle opening of a door half-way down the passage, Peter Cameron's low-voiced call, "Mither, bring a new can'le wi' ye," and the unmistakable awesome fragrance of the sick-room that smote the boys' senses with subtle, dread suggestion of the end that was soon to come. The two boys felt every movement as if keen footsteps were treading upon their hearts.

"Come ben an' tak' a peep at Mary, will ye, laddies?" and Mrs. Cameron led the way through the inner kitchen door.

The boys started at the invitation; they had the instinct of flight upon them, for it was not bonnie little Mary that they thought of as being in possession of the best bedroom; it was Death, and they were afraid to approach him.

"Dinna be feared," the mother added, as she noted their hesitation. "It's just little Mary that ye'll see, but I doot if she'll ken ye noo."

With beating hearts and hushed tread, the boys followed Mrs. Cameron along the narrow passage.

Barely crossing the doorway of the sick-room, and pressing as close to each other as they could get, they turned their frightened eyes towards the face upon the pillows—the old, sweet face with its big blue eyes and auburn aureole. One glance, and the tension of their minds was instantly relieved. They drew a step nearer to the bed, and edged away from each other an inch or two; it was Mary after all, and if Death were present, too, he was not so terrible as they had expected him to be.

"Here's Rob and Geordie come t' see ye, honey," the mother said, as she bent above the dying girl. "And Geordie's brought ye such a beautiful shape o' jeely from Janet McCormick."

There was a half-turn of the tired child-face, a moment's lifting of two bright eyes, a flicker—as if the old roguish smile were coming back, and then expressionless stillness again, new-pierced each moment by a short, stabbing breath.

Rob and Geordie lost all their dread. In the blue eyes, the auburn frizzle, and the poor ghost of the old roguish smile, Mary had come back to them. They had no thought of flight now, and it was not till Mrs. Cameron spoke again that they knew it was time to withdraw.

"Ye'll better gie her a kiss, laddies, and syne be mak'in' yer ways hame; it'll be gettin' late for ye t' be on the road."

Geordie went forward to the bedside and put his lips reverently to the damp brow of the dying girl; after

a moment's hesitation Rob followed his companion's example. They hardly heard Mrs. Cameron's gentle "Good-night," and were glad to have the shelter of the outside darkness for the hiding of their sore heart-sobs.

"Oh, Robbie, I canna bear't. Why did ye gar me cairry the jeely?"

"What's the maitter wi' ye? Can ye no' haud yer tongue?" and there was a trace of the fierceness in Rob's rejoinder by which strong natures try to swallow up their grief.

"Ye shouldna hev let me do't, Rob," Geordie continued, heedless of his leader's rough interjection in the brimming of his boyish sorrow and contrition. "It wes you she liked best; I kent that a' the time. She tell't me on Hallowe'en nicht, when we wes dookin' for apples, 'at she wad ruither dook wi' you than anybody."

Geordie's confession was broken with sobs that he had neither strength nor will to hold back. His companion made no immediate answer. When he did speak it was in softer tones than he had used before.

"Dinna be thinkin' aboot Mary that way, Geordie! She's no' for either you or me, and if we're t' see her again, I doot we'll hev t' be better than we are th' noo."

* * * * *

The half-yearly Sacrament fell on the Sabbath after bonnie Mary Cameron had been laid to rest under the old yew-tree in the northeast corner of the Kirk-yard.

It was a sweet summer's day, heavy with the breath of the ripening corn that an early morning shower had set loose on the air, and even old Rorie Morrison—the last to settle upon his feet at the prayer, for the weight of the century of years that was on him—was tempted to the Kirk. About a hundred of the older folk sat at the white-clothed tables, when the Minister gave out the opening Psalm; when he came down from the pulpit, half a dozen others rose from their own seats in the side pews and took their places with slow reverence among the intending communicants. The Kirk had the hush of death upon it that day. There was no look of expectancy or joy on the faces of the worshipers; in nearly every heart, if the truth were known, there was probably an echo of the self-distrustful words with which old Rorie was accustomed to take his token from the Minister at the close of the morning service on the Fast Day. "It's very questionable, sir," he used to say in a kind of groan, "if I should be gaun there ava."

And certainly the gloom upon the communicants' faces was not dispelled by the opening of the exhortation which Mr. Carment gave at the Fencing of the Tables. According to kirkly usage, he depicted in strenuous, unsparing terms, the terrors of a broken law; he dwelt upon the hideousness of sin, the inability of mortal man by any effort of personal righteousness to span the awful gulf that stretched between him and the favor of his God, and the inflexible justice of the decree that would condemn them all to everlasting burnings. Higher and higher he reared the Fence, until

some of his hearers quivered in fearful foreboding of the doom that awaited the unworthy receivers of the sacred symbols.

But when Mr. Carment turned from the Law to the Gospel, there was an instant perceptible change even in his tones. The prophetic accent grew weaker; he abandoned himself to the spell of the Savior's wonderful love. To some who listened it was evident that the discipline of the past year had not been vainly suffered in the Minister's life. There was a pleading tenderness, a new note of hopeful conviction in his words of spiritual encouragement; he made the way of the Kingdom gentler and more winsome than some had ever seen it to be before. The communicants forgot their gloomy misgivings; they were swept upwards by the impulse from the Minister's heart into a world that had the fresh light of a spring morning on its face, and was filled with the music of a Love that spoke them peace.

"Man, yon was gran'," the Souter whispered to Roderick Farquharson at the close of the service.

"Ay," the grim Elder responded dubiously, "but whiles I wes kind o' frichted."

"Frichted! What ailed ye th' day?"

"Well, ye mun alloo that the Minister gien the Fence some afa dings. He made it high enough at the first t' gie Gabriel his work gettin' ower it, but at the hinder end he broke it aboot that wy 'at a sizeable deil micht hev slippit through. I was expectin'

every meenit t' see him shake hands wi' the Mischief himself."

But Roderick Farquharson's concern about the Minister's evangelical latitude was not deeply rooted. On the way home he drew his tongue delicately several times around his thin upper lip, as though there claved to it the flavor of the new wine of the Kingdom.

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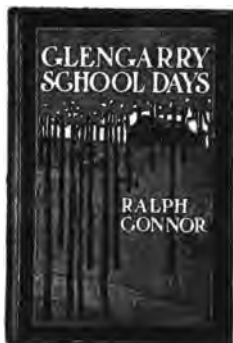
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